

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

# HRSA

Health Resources & Services Administration

Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Community-Based Division

**Rural Health Network Development Planning Program**

**Funding Opportunity Number: HRSA-22-059**

**Funding Opportunity Type: New**

**Assistance Listings (AL/CFDA) Number: 93.912**

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

Fiscal Year 2022

**Application Due Date: January 28, 2022**

Ensure your [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) and [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) registrations and passwords are current immediately!

HRSA will not approve deadline extensions for lack of registration.

Registration in all systems may take up to 1 month to complete.

**Issuance Date: October 29, 2021**

Nkem Osian, MPH

Public Health Analyst, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Telephone: (301) 443-2751

Email: [nosian@hrsa.gov](mailto:nosian@hrsa.gov)

See [Section VII](#) for a complete list of agency contacts.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 254c(f)

## 508 COMPLIANCE DISCLAIMER

Note: Persons using assistive technology may not be able to fully access information in this file. For assistance, please email or call one of the HRSA staff listed in [Section VII. Agency Contacts](#).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is accepting applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2022 Rural Health Network Development Planning Program. The purpose of this program is to promote the planning and development of integrated rural health care networks to: (i) achieve efficiencies; (ii) expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of basic health care services and associated health outcomes; and (iii) strengthen the rural health care system as a whole.

Funding Opportunity Title:	Rural Health Network Development Planning Program
Funding Opportunity Number:	HRSA-22-059
Due Date for Applications:	January 28, 2022
Anticipated Total Available FY 2022 Funding:	\$2,000,000
Estimated Number and Type of Awards:	Up to 20 grants
Estimated Award Amount:	Up to \$100,000 per award
Cost Sharing/Match Required:	No
Period of Performance:	July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 (1 year)
Eligible Applicants:	To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, an entity –  (A) Shall be a domestic public or private, non-profit or for-profit entity with demonstrated experience serving, or the capacity to serve, rural underserved populations; <b>and</b>  (B) Shall represent a network composed of participants – (i) that includes at least three or more health care provider organizations and (ii) that may be rural, urban, nonprofit or for-profit entities, with at least 66 percent (two-thirds) of

	<p>network members located in a HRSA-designated rural area<sup>1</sup> ; <b>and</b></p> <p>(C) Shall not previously have received a grant under this subsection for the same or similar project, unless the entity is proposing to expand the scope of the project or the area that will be served through the project.</p> <p>See <a href="#">Section III.1</a> of this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for complete eligibility information.</p>
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## **Application Guide**

You (the applicant organization/agency) are responsible for reading and complying with the instructions included in [HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide](#), available online, except where instructed in this NOFO to do otherwise.

## **Technical Assistance**

HRSA has scheduled the following technical assistance:

### *Webinar*

Day and Date: Wednesday, November 17, 2021

Time: 3 – 4 p.m. ET

Call-In Number (*if without computer access or computer audio*): 1-833-568-8864

Meeting ID: 161 864 4747

Participant Code: 81822150

Weblink: <https://hrsa.gov/zoomgov.com/j/1618644747?pwd=SXIUbUpSTjVoZS93UUpWM3hMWjdDUT09>

**NOTE:** This webinar will be recorded and playback information can be requested at [nosian@hrsa.gov](mailto:nosian@hrsa.gov)

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on HRSA-designated rural areas, visit the [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#).

# Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>I. PROGRAM FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. <i>Purpose</i> .....	1
2. <i>Background</i> .....	2
<b>II. AWARD INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1. <i>Type of Application and Award</i> .....	3
2. <i>Summary of Funding</i> .....	3
<b>III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1. <i>Eligible Applicants</i> .....	3
2. <i>Cost Sharing/Matching</i> .....	5
3. <i>Other</i> .....	5
<b>IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1. <i>Address to Request Application Package</i> .....	6
2. <i>Content and Form of Application Submission</i> .....	6
<i>Program-Specific Instructions</i> .....	7
i. <i>Project Abstract</i> .....	7
ii. <i>Project Narrative</i> .....	9
iii. <i>Budget</i> .....	13
iv. <i>Budget Narrative</i> .....	14
v. <i>Attachments</i> .....	15
3. <i>Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number     Transition to the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award     Management (SAM)</i> .....	17
4. <i>Intergovernmental Review</i> .....	19
5. <i>Funding Restrictions</i> .....	19
<b>V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>20</b>
1. <i>Review Criteria</i> .....	20
2. <i>Review and Selection Process</i> .....	23
3. <i>Assessment of Risk</i> .....	24
<b>VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>24</b>
1. <i>Award Notices</i> .....	24
2. <i>Administrative and National Policy Requirements</i> .....	24
3. <i>Reporting</i> .....	26
<b>VII. AGENCY CONTACTS .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>VIII. OTHER INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING ADVICE .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: COMMON DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: USEFUL RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>37</b>

# I. Program Funding Opportunity Description

## 1. Purpose

This notice announces the opportunity to apply for funding under the Rural Health Network Planning Program (“Network Planning Grant”). The purpose of the Network Planning Grant Program is to promote the development of integrated health care networks in order to: (i) achieve efficiencies; (ii) expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of basic health care services and associated health outcomes; and (iii) strengthen the rural health care system as a whole.

This program supports one year of planning and brings together key parts of a rural health care delivery system, particularly those entities that may not have collaborated in the past, to establish and/or improve local capacity in order to strengthen rural community health interventions, and enhance care coordination.

For the purposes of this program, an integrated health care network is defined as an organizational arrangement among at least three (3) regional or local health care organizations that come together to develop strategies for improving health services in a community.

This program uses the concept of developing networks as a strategy toward linking rural health care partners together to address local challenges, and help rural partners achieve greater collective capacity to overcome challenges related to limited economies of scale for individual hospitals, clinics or other key rural health care stakeholders. Studies show that integrated health care networks formed in rural communities allow for better resource allocation of both personnel and shared assets to decrease and/or prevent chronic disease, create stronger buy-in, trust and input among partners and community members, improve data sharing, and increase sustainability and longevity of the network.<sup>2 3</sup> Because of the benefits a network provides, 88% of past Network Planning awardees have reported the sustainability of at least some elements of their network activities post-grant <sup>4</sup>.

### ***Legislative Aims:***

Applicants must describe planning activities that support **at least one (1)** of the legislative aims below. For additional information, please see **Appendix A**

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<sup>2</sup> NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis and University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center, 2017. Rural Community Health Toolkit [online] Rural Health Information Hub. Available at: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/rural-toolkit> [Accessed 27 May 2021].

<sup>3</sup> University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center and NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis, 2018. Rural Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Toolkit [online] Rural Health Information Hub. Available at: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion> [Accessed 27 May 2021].

<sup>4</sup> Tuttle M, Rydberg K, and Henning-Smith C. Success among Rural Health Network Development Planning Grant Awardees: Barriers and Facilitators. UMN Rural Health Research Center Policy Brief. May 2021. <https://rhrc.umn.edu/publication/success-among-rural-health-network-development-planning-grant-awardees-barriers-and-facilitators/>

- **Aim #1: Achieve efficiencies**
- **Aim #2: Expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of basic health care services and associated health outcomes**
- **Aim #3: Strengthen the local rural health care system**

## **2. Background**

This program is authorized by 42 U.S.C. 254c(f) to expand delivery of health care services in rural communities through the planning of integrated health care networks in rural areas. At the conclusion of the grant program, network partners will be able to achieve efficiencies, increase access to care and coordination, and strengthen the local rural health care system. At the conclusion of this one-year award, recipients will report on various process and outcome measures, as well as fulfill other award reporting requirements.

The intent of the Network Planning Grant Program is to allow applicants the flexibility to determine their unique community needs based on historical health care context, community input, and relevant data sources. Applicant organizations should describe how the rural community participated in identifying the focus area and should emphasize how their project will benefit the rural community. Additional information on how to reach consensus on community needs for this project is located in **Appendix A** under [Pre\\_Application\\_Planning\\_Advice](#).

The Network Planning Grant Program supports and encourages creative programs that aim to confront important public health issues and improve equity, by addressing the needs of target population groups who are historically underserved, including those who suffer from poorer health outcomes, health disparities and other inequalities. A study of past Network Planning grantees highlighted the continual need for networks to focus on the dual factors of rurality and race<sup>5</sup> to better serve low-income populations, the elderly, women, infants, adolescents, racial and ethnic minority populations, LGBTQ+ populations, and rural populations with special health care needs. Studies have shown that rural communities have higher morbidity and mortality rates than their urban peers, and minority rural populations have significantly higher rates of sickness<sup>6</sup> that could be lessened through the coordination of care provided by an integrated health care network.

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<sup>5</sup> .Rural Health Research Recap, Official web site of the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration. Published 2021. Accessed March 10, 2021. <https://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/assets/3974-16603/rural-ethnic-racial-disparities-inequities-recap.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/recaps/12>

## II. Award Information

### 1. Type of Application and Award

Type of applications sought: New

HRSA will provide funding in the form of a grant.

### 2. Summary of Funding

HRSA estimates approximately \$2,000,000 to be available to fund 20 recipients. The actual amount available will not be determined until enactment of the final FY 2022 federal appropriation. You may apply for a ceiling amount of up to \$100,000 total cost (includes both direct and indirect, facilities and administrative costs) per year. This program notice is subject to the appropriation of funds, and is a contingency action taken to ensure that, should funds become available for this purpose, HRSA can process applications and award funds appropriately.

The period of performance is July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 (1 year).

***Please note:*** There is **no** implementation component to this award once the planning grant ends. The funding for this program covers one year of the planning grant **only**.

All HRSA awards are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements at [45 CFR part 75](#).

## III. Eligibility Information

### 1. Eligible Applicants

- a. Eligible applicants shall be domestic public or private, non-profit or for-profit entities, including faith-based, community-based, tribes and tribal organizations. The applicant organization may be located in a rural or urban area, but must have demonstrated experience serving, or the capacity to serve, rural underserved populations. The applicant organization should describe their experience and/or capacity serving rural populations in the **Project Abstract** section of the application.
- b. Applicants should list the rural counties that will be served. Proposed counties should be fully rural, but if counties are partially rural counties, please include the rural census tract(s) in the **Project Abstract**. **It is important that applicants list the rural counties (or rural census tract(s) if the county is partially rural) that will be served through their proposed project, as this will be one of the factors that will determine the applicant organization's eligibility to apply for this grant funding.**

- To ascertain rural service areas, please refer to <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/rural-health>. This webpage allows you to search by county or street address and determine rural eligibility.
- c. Each applicant organization and network partner must have its own EIN number unless an exception is requested (see details below under 'Exceptions Request').
- d. In addition to the 50 U.S. states, only organizations in the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Federated State of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau may apply. If you are located outside the 50 states, you must still meet the eligibility requirements.

### **Network Requirements**

One of the purposes of the Network Planning Grant Program is to assist in the planning of an integrated health care network, specifically with network participants who do not have a history of formal collaborative efforts. For the purposes of this program, HRSA defines an integrated health care network as at least three regional or local health care organizations that come together to plan and develop strategies for improving health services in a community. The entities should have a common and collective interest in improving health and addressing health care challenges in their local community.

- e. Network members may be located in rural or urban areas and can include all domestic public or private, non-profit or for-profit entities including faith-based, community-based organizations, tribes, and tribal organizations. We recognize that rural-urban partnerships can sometimes lead to the underrepresentation of rural needs. Therefore, HRSA requires at least sixty-six percent (66%), or two-thirds of network members (members with signed Letters of Commitment) of the proposed project be located in a HRSA designated rural area, as defined by the [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#). The applicant organization must verify and indicate the rural or urban eligibility of *each* network member in **Attachment 6**.
- f. Applicant organizations located in urban areas should ensure a collaborative consortium, with shared local control from the partnering rural counties. Activities and services of the network must be provided in a non-metropolitan county or rural census tract. Proposed rural counties should be fully rural. For partially rural counties, please include the rural census tract(s) in the **Project Abstract**.
- g. The applicant organization should have the staffing and infrastructure necessary to oversee program activities, serve as the fiscal agent for the award, and ensure that local control for the award is vested in the targeted rural communities. The applicant organization should have demonstrated experience serving, or the capacity to serve, rural underserved populations, and describe the experience and/or capacity in the **Project Abstract**.
- h. The applicant organization is **not** required to be a rural health network at the time of submission.

- i. Previous Network Planning Grant award recipients who propose a continuation of an awarded project or existing networks that seek to only expand services or expand their service areas are **not eligible** to apply. However, existing networks that (1) seek to expand services or expand their service areas and (2) include new or additional partners or (3) target a new population or new focus area are eligible to apply. Existing networks that are proposing to collaborate with at least two outside organizations that they have not worked with before under a formal relationship are eligible to apply.

### ***Exceptions Request***

- j. **Multiple EIN exception**: In general, multiple applications associated with the same DUNS number and/or EIN are not allowable. However, HRSA recognizes a growing trend towards greater consolidation within the rural health care industry and the possibility that multiple health care organizations may share the same EIN as its parent organization. Therefore, at HRSA's discretion, multiple health care organizations that share the same EIN as its parent organization, or organizations within the same network who are proposing different projects are eligible to request a multiple EIN exception if the applicants provide HRSA with the information found in Attachment 10.
- k. **Tribal exception**: HRSA is aware that tribes and tribal governments may have an established infrastructure without separation of services recognized by filing for EINs. In case of tribes and tribal governments, only a single EIN located in a HRSA-designated rural area is necessary to meet the network requirements. Tribes and tribal entities under the same tribal governance must still meet the network criteria of three or more entities committed to the proposed approach, as evidenced by a signed letter of commitment. Please refer to **Attachment 10** for additional information on how to request this exception.

**Applications from organizations that do not meet the above criteria will not be considered under this notice of funding opportunity.**

## **2. Cost Sharing/Matching**

Cost sharing/matching is not required for this program.

## **3. Other**

HRSA may not consider an application for funding if it contains any of the non-responsive criteria below:

- Exceeds the ceiling amount
- Fails to satisfy the deadline requirements referenced in [Section IV.4](#)

HRSA will only accept your **last** validated electronic submission, under the correct funding opportunity number, before the Grants.gov application due date as the final and only acceptable application.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### 1. Address to Request Application Package

HRSA **requires** you to apply electronically. HRSA encourages you to apply through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) using the SF-424 workspace application package associated with this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) following the directions provided at [Grants.gov: HOW TO APPLY FOR GRANTS](https://www.grants.gov/apply-for-grants).

The NOFO is also known as “Instructions” on Grants.gov. You must select “Subscribe” and provide your email address for HRSA-22-059 in order to receive notifications including modifications, clarifications, and/or republications of the NOFO on Grants.gov. You will also receive notifications of documents placed in the RELATED DOCUMENTS tab on Grants.gov that may affect the NOFO and your application. *You are ultimately responsible for reviewing the [For Applicants](#) page for all information relevant to this NOFO.*

### 2. Content and Form of Application Submission

#### Application Format Requirements

Section 4 of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) provides general instructions for the budget, budget narrative, staffing plan and personnel requirements, assurances, certifications, etc. You must submit the information outlined in the HRSA *SF-424 Application Guide* in addition to the program-specific information below. You are responsible for reading and complying with the instructions included in HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) except where instructed in the NOFO to do otherwise. You must submit the application in the English language and in the terms of U.S. dollars (45 CFR § 75.111(a)).

See Section 8.5 of the HRSA *SF-424 Application Guide* for the Application Completeness Checklist.

#### Application Page Limitation

The total size of all uploaded files included in the page limit shall be no more than the equivalent of **50 pages** when printed by HRSA. The page limit includes the project and budget narratives, and attachments required in the *Application Guide* and this NOFO.

Please note: Effective April 22, 2021, the abstract is no longer an attachment that counts in the page limit. The abstract is the standard form (SF) “Project Abstract Summary.” Standard OMB-approved forms included in the workspace application package do not count in the page limit. If you use an OMB-approved form that is not

included in the workspace application package for HRSA-22-059, it may count against the page limit. Therefore, we strongly recommend you only use Grants.gov workspace forms associated with this NOFO to avoid exceeding the page limit. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement and proof of non-profit status (if applicable) do not count in the page limit. **It is therefore important to take appropriate measures to ensure your application does not exceed the specified page limit. Any application exceeding the page limit of 50 will not be read, evaluated, or considered for funding.**

**Applications must be complete, within the maximum specified page limit, and validated by Grants.gov under HRSA-22-059 before the deadline.**

### **Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion Certification**

- 1) You certify on behalf of the applicant organization, by submission of your proposal, that neither you nor your principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any federal department or agency.
- 2) Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in [45 CFR § 75.371](#), including suspension or debarment. (See also 2 CFR parts 180 and 376, and 31 U.S.C. § 3354).
- 3) If you are unable to attest to the statements in this certification, you must include an explanation in *Attachment 11: Other Relevant Documents*.

See Section 4.1 viii of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information on all certifications.

### **Program-Specific Instructions**

In addition to application requirements and instructions in Section 4 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) (including the budget, budget narrative, staffing plan and personnel requirements, assurances, certifications, and abstract), include the following:

#### **i. *Project Abstract***

Use the Standard OMB-approved Project Abstract Summary Form 2.0 that is included in the workspace application package. Do not upload the abstract as an attachment or it will count toward the page limitation. For information required in the Project Abstract Summary Form, see Section 4.1.ix of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

It is recommended that you provide your Project Abstract in this tabular format with the required information below (no more than two pages):

<b>ABSTRACT HEADING CONTENT</b>
<p><b>Applicant Organization Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization Name, Address (street, city, state, zip code)</li> <li>• Facility/Entity Type (e.g., FQHC, RHC, public health department), and,</li> <li>• Website Address (if applicable)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Designated Project Director Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Director Name &amp; Title, Phone Number(s), and E-Mail Address</li> </ul>
<p><b>Network Planning Grant Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network Name</li> </ul>
<p><b>Legislative Aim</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example: Aim # 1: Achieve Efficiencies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Focus Area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example: Care Coordination</li> </ul>
<p><b>Proposed Service Region</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example: states, cities, counties (<i>required</i>)</li> <li>• <u>NOTE</u>: Proposed rural counties should be fully rural. For partially rural counties, include rural census tract(s)</li> </ul>
<b>ABSTRACT BODY CONTENT</b>
<p><b>Target Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief description of the target population group(s) to be served</li> <li>• Brief description of underserved populations who have historically suffered from poorer health outcomes, health disparities, and other inequities (<i>if applicable</i>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Network/Consortium Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the organization names and facility/entity type of partner(s) who have agreed to be a part of the network.</li> <li>• HRSA requires an attestation that at least sixty-six percent (66%), or two-thirds of network members (members with signed Letters of Commitment) of the proposed project be located in a HRSA-designated rural area, as defined by the <a href="#">Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Experience in Serving Rural Underserved Populations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe experience serving or the capacity to serve, rural underserved populations. This can include partnerships, activities, program implementation and previous work of a similar nature.</li> <li>• HRSA requires that urban applicants describe the geographic relationship to the proposed rural service population as well as the plans to ensure that rural populations are served. Urban applicants should also describe how they will ensure a high degree of local rural control in the project (see page 19).</li> </ul>

### **Funding Preference**

- You must explicitly request a qualifying funding preference and cite the qualification that is being met (see 42 U.S.C. 254c(h)(3)); additional information can be found in [Section V.2. Funding Preference](#). FORHP highly recommends that you include this language:

**“(Your organization’s name) is requesting a funding preference based on qualification X. County Y is in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area.”**

If applicable, you need to provide supporting documentation in **Attachment 8**. Refer to [Section V.2](#) for further information.

## **NARRATIVE GUIDANCE**

To ensure that you fully address the review criteria, the table below provides a crosswalk between the narrative language and where each section falls within the review criteria. Any forms or attachments referenced in a narrative section may be considered during the objective review.

<b>Narrative Section</b>	<b>Review Criteria</b>
Introduction	(1) Need
Needs Assessment	(1) Need
Methodology	(2) Response
Work Plan	(4) Impact
Resolution of Challenges	(2) Response
Evaluation and Technical Support Capacity	(3) Evaluative Measures and (5) Resources/Capabilities
Organizational Information	(5) Resources/Capabilities
Budget Narrative	(6) Support Requested

### **ii. Project Narrative**

This section provides a comprehensive description of all aspects of the proposed project. It should be succinct, self-explanatory, consistent with forms and attachments, and organized in alignment with the sections and format below so that reviewers can understand the proposed project.

**Network Establishment:**

Your application must clearly describe how you plan to establish your network (if your network is newly formed), the proposed structure of your network, and how your network will address a need that cannot be addressed individually.

**Focus Area(s):**

Your application must clearly identify a focus area(s) based on the community needs. FORHP highly recommends that you include this language:

“(Your organization’s name)’s focus area is Care Coordination.”

Over the course of the period of performance, networks are expected to take steps towards creating strong infrastructure and developing a strategic plan for programmatic activities. That plan should identify the approach by which the applicant will sustain the efforts of the network beyond federal funding.

Use the following section headers for the narrative:

- INTRODUCTION & NEEDS ASSESSMENT-- Corresponds to Section V’s Review [Criterion 1](#)

Summarize the program’s goals and expected outcomes of the program. You must address the following items:

***Structural Need***

- A. Clearly describe the health care service environment and include appropriate data sources (i.e., local, tribal, state, and/or federal) in which the network is functioning
- B. Describe the structural challenges that affect health care in the service area (e.g., poverty, uninsured or underinsured, chronic disease burdens, social determinants of health, lack of administrative resources for grant writing and funding).

***Community Need***

- C. Outline the needs of the rural community, how the rural community participated in identifying the need, and how network partners will address the unmet needs to serve and benefit the rural community.
- D. Describe gaps in the existing health care system and activities that the network will perform to fill those gaps (i.e., personnel, service delivery needs, shared resources, etc.).

- E. Explain how a Network Planning Grant award would address unmet needs. Describe the need for creating a network to address the identified area(s) of focus. Demonstrate the need for federal funding to support network planning grant activities.

### *Health Equity*

- F. Describe the target population and any subpopulations who are historically underserved, including those who suffer from poorer health outcomes, health disparities, and other inequalities. These populations include but are not limited to: low-income populations, the elderly, infants, adolescents, racial and ethnic minority populations, LGBTQ+ populations, and rural populations with special health care needs (the full definition of underserved communities is available in **Appendix B: Common Definitions**).
- G. Describe how the network will improve equity in the local health care environment.
- H. Document the socio-cultural determinants of health and health disparities impacting the population or communities. Use and cite demographic data when possible to support the information.

- **METHODOLOGY** -- Corresponds to Section V's Review [Criterion 2](#)

Propose methods that you will use to address the stated needs and meet each of the previously described program requirements and expectations in this NOFO. You must address the following items:

- A. Identify the proposed goals, objectives and expected outcomes for both network organizational development and program planning of the project.
- B. Include information on how you selected network members for inclusion in the network. Include:
  - a. The expertise of each network member
  - b. Describe the role of each network member in the project (as it relates to **Attachment 6**)
  - c. A description of previous collaboration among network partners.
- C. Describe how the local rural community to be served will experience increased access to quality health care services as a result of the planning activities carried out by the network. When possible, provide and support your expected outcomes with quantifiable data.
- D. If applicable, describe how the network plans to address and reduce health disparities within the target service area.

- **WORK PLAN** -- Corresponds to Section V's Review [Criterion 4](#)

Include a project work plan that clearly illustrates the network's goals, strategies, activities, and measurable outcomes proposed during the entire period of performance. The work plan must identify the individual or organization responsible for carrying out each activity and include a timeline for the period of performance. Include the work plan as **Attachment 3**.

- RESOLUTION OF CHALLENGES -- Corresponds to Section V's Review [Criterion 2](#)

Discuss potential barriers and challenges that you are likely to encounter in designing and implementing the activities described in the work plan, and approaches that you will use to resolve such challenges.

- EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY -- Corresponds to Section V's Review [Criterion 3](#) & [Criterion 5](#)

Describe how program goals will be tracked, measured, and evaluated, and how the network will measure progress toward meeting the project goals and objectives. This data is best presented in a table format with the goals listed in the left hand column (Goal 1, 2, 3, etc.). Across the top of the table, please include questions that will address how each goal will be tracked, measured, and evaluated (How will you measure program goals?; How will you monitor program progress?; How will programmatic success be evaluated?) Although tabular format is recommended, it is not required.

- ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION -- Corresponds to Section V's Review [Criterion 5](#)

- A. Succinctly describe the abilities and contributions of the applicant organization and the network members. Provide a brief overview of the applicant organization that includes information such as:
  - your organization's current mission
  - structure, leadership, size of organization, and staffing
  - scope of current activities
  - your organization's ability to manage the award project and personnel
  - your organization's financial practices and systems that assure your organization can properly account for and manage the federal funds

### **Project Director**

- Identify the project director in the **Project Abstract** and **Attachment 4**. The project director will be responsible for project/program monitoring and carrying out the award activities. The proposed network should identify a permanent project director prior to receiving award funds. If the applicant organization has an interim project director or has not yet hired a person to serve as the project director, discuss the process and timeline for hiring a permanent project director for this project.
- HRSA strongly recommends the project director allot adequate time (*at least .25 FTE*) to the program and has management experience involving multiple organizational arrangements. HRSA highly recommends your staffing plan should include supporting and key personnel that total **at least one full-time FTE** at the time of application.

## Key Personnel

- Describe key personnel roles and how they relate to the network and planning project. Key personnel are individuals whom would receive funds by this award or person(s) conducting activities central to this program (**Attachment 4**).

## Network Members

- A table must be used in **Attachment 6** to present the following information on **each** network member:
  - organization name
  - address
  - primary contact person
  - Employer Identification Number (EIN) (must be provided for each network member) and,
  - Verify and indicate the rural or urban eligibility of each network member (*per the [Rural Health Eligibility Analyzer](#)*).
- Urban applicants should describe how they will ensure a high degree of local rural control in the project. This should include a description that reflects a shared decision-making structure and capacity. Outline the roles and responsibilities within the network for each network member and address the capacity to carry out program goals. Explain why each of the proposed network members were selected, and the extent to which the network and/or its members engage the community in its planning and functions as appropriate.

## BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE -- Corresponds to Section V's Review [Criterion 6](#)

- A. Provide a complete, consistent, and detailed budget presentation for a one-year period of performance through the submission of the SF-424 A budget form and a Budget Narrative that justifies the appropriateness of the requested funds. See [Section IV.2.ii](#) for more information regarding the Budget section.
- B. The budget should be reasonable, logical and clearly document how and why each line item request (such as personnel, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual service, etc.) supports the goals and activities of the proposed award-funded activities.

### iii. **Budget**

The directions offered in the SF-424 Application Guide may differ from those offered by Grants.gov. Follow the instructions in Section 4.1.iv of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) and the additional budget instructions provided below. A budget that follows the *Application Guide* will ensure that, if HRSA selects your application for funding, you will have a well-organized plan and, by carefully following the approved plan, may avoid audit issues during the implementation phase.

**Reminder:** The Total Project or Program Costs are the total allowable costs (inclusive of direct **and** indirect costs) you incur to carry out a HRSA-supported project or activity. Total project or program costs include costs charged to the award and costs borne by you to satisfy a matching or cost-sharing requirement, as applicable.

In addition, the Rural Health Network Development Planning program requires the following:

**Travel:** Please allocate travel funds for one (1) program staff to attend a one-and-a half (1.5) day award recipient meeting at a location to be determined and include the cost of this as a budget line item. To determine estimated travel costs to Washington, DC, applicants should refer to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) per diem rates for FY 2022. Per diem rates can be found on the GSA's website: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel-resources>.

**Equipment:** Equipment costs that exceed 5 percent of the total award amount may be considered unreasonable and thus, unallowable.

**Legal Costs:** Legal costs that exceed 20 percent of the total award amount may be considered unreasonable and unallowable. Legal costs include services and activities such as consultations, 501(c)(3) application preparation, articles of incorporation and by-laws development.

**Contractual:** Consistent with 45 CFR 75, you must provide a clear explanation of the purpose of each contract, how the costs were estimated, and the specific contract deliverables.

**Other:** The purpose of this program is to fund planning activities **only**. Applications that propose to use award funds to pay for the direct provision of clinical health services will be deemed unresponsive and will not be considered for funding under this notice.

As required by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260), Division H, § 202 and Division A of the FY 2022 Extending Funding and Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 117-43), "None of the funds appropriated in this title shall be used to pay the salary of an individual, through a grant or other extramural mechanism, at a rate in excess of Executive Level II." See Section 4.1.iv Budget – Salary Limitation of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information. Note that these or other salary limitations may apply in the following fiscal years, as required by law.

#### **iv. Budget Narrative**

See Section 4.1.v. of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

In addition, the Rural Health Network Development Planning program requires the following:

Please provide a budget narrative justification that explains the amounts requested for each line item in the budget. The budget narrative should specifically describe how each item supports the achievement of proposed objectives. The budget period is for one (1) year. Line item information must be provided to explain the costs entered in the SF-424A. Thoroughly describe how each item in the “other” category is justified. The budget narrative **MUST** be concise. Do **NOT** use the budget narrative to expand the project narrative.

## **v. Attachments**

Provide the following items in the order specified below to complete the content of the application. **Unless otherwise noted, attachments count toward the application page limitation.** Your indirect cost rate agreement and proof of non-profit status (if applicable) will not count toward the page limitation. **Clearly label each attachment.** You must upload attachments into the application. Any *hyperlinked* attachments will *not* be reviewed/opened by HRSA.

### **Attachment 1: Documentation from State Office of Rural Health (Required)**

All applicants are required to notify their State Offices of Rural Health (SORHs) or other appropriate state entities early in the application process to advise them of their intent to apply. SORHs can often provide technical assistance to applicants. Please include a copy of the SORH’s response to your correspondence and/or the letter or email you sent to the SORH notifying them of your intent to apply. SORH’s applying as the applicant organization must provide an attestation that their application was independently developed and written and that they have not knowingly duplicated efforts or project ideas of non-SORH applicants within their state. By statute, all applicants are required to consult with their SORH or other equivalent state entities. However, if applicants from the U.S. territories do not have the ability to do so, this requirement does not apply and U.S. territories are still eligible to apply. A list of the SORHs can be accessed at: <https://nosorh.org/nosorhmembers/nosorh-members-browse-by-state/>.

### **Attachment 2: Areas of Impact (Required)**

Include a list of the impacted areas, counties and cities, and a legible map that clearly shows the location of network members. If an organization is located in a rural census tract of an urban county, the rural census tract(s) must be clearly identified here as well as the county and census tract(s) of the network partners. **Note:** Maps should be legible and in black and white.

### **Attachment 3: Work Plan (Required)**

Attach the work plan for the project that includes all information detailed in [Section IV.2.ii. Project Narrative](#). The work plan should illustrate the network’s goals, strategies, activities, and measurable progress and outcome measures. The work plan must outline the individual or organization responsible for carrying out each activity and include a timeline for the period of performance.

**Attachment 4: Staffing Plan and Job Descriptions for Key Personnel (see Section 4.1. of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#)) (Required)**

Keep each job description to one page in length as much as is possible. Include the role, responsibilities, and qualifications of proposed project staff to run the network, and specifically to accomplish the proposed network planning grant project. Staffing needs should be explained and should have a direct link to activities proposed in the Project Narrative and budget sections of the application. Staffing plan should include in-kind personnel to the program. Your staffing plan should demonstrate supporting and key personnel that total at least one full-time FTE at the time of application. For the purposes of this application, key personnel are individuals who are funded by this award or person(s) conducting activities central to this program.

**Attachment 5: Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel (Required)**

Include biographical sketches for persons occupying the key positions, not to exceed two pages in length per person. In the event that a biographical sketch is included for an identified individual not yet hired, include a letter of commitment from that person with the biographical sketch. If the project director (PD) serves as a PD for other federal awards, please list the federal awards as well as the percent FTE for each respective federal award.

**Attachment 6: Network Organizational Chart and Network Member Information (Required)**

Provide a one-page organizational chart of the network that includes how decisions will be made and how communication will flow. Provide a list of all network members that includes:

- the organization's name and type (e.g., CHC, hospital, health department, etc.);
- the name of the key person from the organization that will be working on the program;
- anticipated role and responsibility in the Network Planning Grant program;
- Employee Identification number (EIN) of each proposed network member
- Verify and indicate that at least sixty-six percent (66%), or two-thirds of network members (members with signed Letters of Commitment) of the proposed project be located in a HRSA-designated rural area, as defined by the [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#).
- Applicants should provide the address of each network member and the screenshot from the analyzer of the urban or rural status.

**Attachment 7: Letters of Commitment (Required)**

Provide a scanned, signed copy of a letter of commitment from each of the network members. Letters of commitment must be submitted with the application and must clearly identify the organizations' roles and responsibilities in the network and project, the activities they will be included in, and how that organization's expertise is pertinent to the network planning grant project. The letter must also include a statement indicating that the proposed partner understands that the award funds be used for the development of an integrated health care network and are not to be used for the exclusive benefit of any one (1) network partner or to provide clinical services.

### **Attachment 8: Request for a Funding Preference (if applicable)**

If requesting a funding preference, the application must provide documentation that supports the funding preference qualification. Please indicate which qualification is being met also in [Section IV.2.i Project Abstract](#). For further information on funding preferences and the required documentation, please refer to [Section V.2](#).

### **Attachment 9: Previous Grants (if applicable)**

If the applicant organization has received any funds from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy within the last 5 years, the grant number and the abstract from the previous award should be included. Please **only provide** the grant number(s) and abstract(s). (Not scored during the objective review).

### **Attachment 10: Exceptions Request (if applicable)**

For Tribal Exceptions and Multiple EIN Exception requests, the follow **must** be included:

- Names, titles, email addresses, and phone numbers for points of contact at each of the applicant organizations and the parent organization;
- Proposed project focus and service area for each applicant organization with the same EIN (these should not overlap);
- Justification for why each applicant organization must apply to this funding opportunity separately as the applicant organization, as opposed to serving as consortium members on other applications;
- Assurance that the applicant organizations will each be responsible for the planning, program management, financial management, and decision making of their respective projects, independent of each other and/or the parent organization; and
- Signatures from the points of contact at each applicant organization and the parent organization.

### **Attachments 11-15: Other Related Documents (Optional)**

Include here any other documents that may be relevant to the application (e.g., Indirect Cost Rate Agreement) (not scored during the objective review).

### **3. Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number Transition to the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM)**

You must obtain a valid DUNS number, also known as the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), and provide that number in the application. In April 2022, the \*DUNS number will be replaced by the UEI, a “new, non-proprietary identifier” requested in, and assigned by, the System for Award Management ([SAM.gov](#)). For more details, visit the following webpages: [Planned UEI Updates in Grant Application Forms](#) and [General Service Administration’s UEI Update](#).

You must register with SAM and continue to maintain active SAM registration with current information at all times during which you have an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by an agency (unless you are an individual or federal agency that is exempted from those requirements under 2 CFR § 25.110(b) or (c), or you have an exception approved by the agency under 2 CFR § 25.110(d)). For your SAM.gov registration, you must submit a [notarized letter](#) appointing the authorized Entity Administrator.

If you are chosen as a recipient, HRSA will not make an award until you have complied with all applicable SAM requirements. If you have not fully complied with the requirements by the time HRSA is ready to make an award, you may be deemed not qualified to receive an award, and HRSA may use that determination as the basis for making an award to another applicant.

If you have already completed Grants.gov registration for HRSA or another federal agency, confirm that the registration is still active and that the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) has been approved.

Currently, the Grants.gov registration process requires information in three separate systems:

- Dun and Bradstreet (<https://www.dnb.com/duns-number.html>)
- System for Award Management (SAM) (<https://sam.gov/content/home> | [SAM.gov Knowledge Base](#))
- Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>)

For more details, see Section 3.1 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

In accordance with the Federal Government's efforts to reduce reporting burden for recipients of federal financial assistance, the general certification and representation requirements contained in the Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) – Assurances – Non-Construction Programs, and the Standard Form 424D (SF-424D) – Assurances – Construction Programs, have been standardized. Effective January 1, 2020, the forms themselves are no longer part of HRSA's application packages instead, the updated common certification and representation requirements will be stored and maintained within SAM. Organizations or individuals applying for federal financial assistance as of January 1, 2020, must validate the federally required common certifications and representations annually through [SAM.gov](#).

**If you fail to allow ample time to complete registration with SAM or Grants.gov, you will not be eligible for a deadline extension or waiver of the electronic submission requirement.**

## Application Due Date

The due date for applications under this NOFO is *January 28, 2022 at 11:59 p.m. ET*. HRSA suggests submitting applications to Grants.gov at least **3 calendar days before the deadline** to allow for any unforeseen circumstances. See Section 8.2.5 – Summary of emails from Grants.gov of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

## 4. Intergovernmental Review

The Rural Health Network Development Planning program is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, as implemented by 45 CFR part 100.

See Section 4.1 ii of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

## 5. Funding Restrictions

You may request funding for a period of performance of up to 1 year, at no more than \$100,000 per year (inclusive of direct **and** indirect costs).

The General Provisions in Division H of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260) and Division A of the FY 2022 Extending Funding and Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 117-43) are in effect at the time this NOFO is posted. Please see Section 4.1 of HRSA's SF-424 Application Guide for additional information. Awards will be made subsequent to enactment of the FY 2022 appropriation. The NOA will reference the FY 2022 appropriation act and any restrictions that may apply. Note that these or other restrictions will apply in the next fiscal year, as required by law.

You cannot use funds under this notice for the following purposes:

- To build or acquire real property or for construction or major renovation or alteration of any space (see 42 U.S.C. 254c(h)).
- To pay for the direct provision of clinical health services will be deemed unresponsive. For the definition of direct health services, please see **Appendix B.**

You are required to have the necessary policies, procedures, and financial controls in place to ensure that your organization complies with all legal requirements and restrictions applicable to the receipt of federal funding including statutory restrictions on use of funds for lobbying, executive salaries, gun control, abortion, etc. Like all other applicable grants requirements, the effectiveness of these policies, procedures, and controls is subject to audit.

Be aware of the requirements for HRSA recipients and subrecipients at 2 CFR § 200.216 regarding prohibition on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment. For details, see the [HRSA Grants Policy Bulletin Number: 2021-01E](#).

All program income generated as a result of awarded funds must be used for approved project-related activities. Any program income earned by the recipient must be used under the addition/additive alternative. You can find post-award requirements for program income at [45 CFR § 75.307](#).

## V. Application Review Information

### 1. Review Criteria

HRSA has procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications to provide for an objective review and to assist you in understanding the standards against which your application will be reviewed. HRSA has critical indicators for each review criterion to assist you in presenting pertinent information related to that criterion and to provide the reviewer with a standard for evaluation.

These criteria are the basis upon which the reviewers will evaluate and score the merit of the application. The entire proposal will be considered during objective review.

Six review criteria are used to review and rank the Rural Health Network Development Planning program applications. Below are descriptions of the review criteria and their scoring points.

Criterion 1: NEED (50 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [INTRODUCTION AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT](#)

#### *Structural Need (25 points)*

1. The extent to which the application clearly describes the health care service environment in which the network will be developed and includes appropriate data sources (i.e., local, tribal, state, and/or federal) in the analysis of the environment in which the network is functioning.
2. The extent to which the application clearly describes structural challenges that affect health care in the service area.

#### *Community Need (15 points)*

3. The extent to which the application clearly describes the purpose of the proposed program, the local/regional health care environment and how the community identified the need, expected outcomes, focus area(s) and the aim(s) the Network Planning Grant project would support.
4. The extent to which relevant services currently available in or near the network service area are discussed as well as the potential impact of the network's activities on providers, programs, organizations, and other network entities in the community. The extent to which the network provides clear examples and strategies describing how the program will benefit the area health providers' ability to improve access to health care and serve the community.

5. The extent to which the applicant describes why federal funds are appropriate to support a network in this service area at this time.
6. The extent to which the application identifies the gaps of the existing health care service providers and the activities the network will perform to fill those gaps (that is, personnel, service delivery needs, shared resources, etc.). In this case, the application includes information on the population in relation to these health provider factors).

*Health Equity Need (10 points)*

7. The degree to which the application identifies the population (and/or subpopulation) of the service area using demographic data whenever appropriate. The extent to which the application documents the unmet health needs/problems in the service area that the network proposes to address.
8. The extent to which the network clearly describes how the network will improve health care equity for underserved communities.

Criterion 2: RESPONSE (20 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [METHODOLOGY AND RESOLUTION OF CHALLENGES](#)

The extent to which the proposed project responds to the “[Purpose](#)” included in the program description. The strength of the proposed goals and objectives and their relationship to the identified project. The extent to which the activities (scientific or other) described in the application are capable of addressing the problem and attaining the project objectives.

*Methodology (15 points)*

1. The extent to which the application identifies the expertise and capacity of each proposed member, and how the expertise relates to the network’s goals as evidenced by the proposed roles and responsibilities of each network member and the key person who will oversee the network activities for each member (see [Attachment 6](#)).
2. The potential level of impact of the network’s services on the providers that are not members of the network in the service area
3. If applicable, the extent to which the network plans to address and reduce health disparities within the target service area.
4. The extent to which the network will impact their rural community and providers.
5. The extent to which the network will strengthen its relationship with the community/region it serves.

*Resolution of Challenges (5 points)*

1. The extent to which the applicant clearly identifies and discusses anticipated challenges that might be encountered in designing and implementing the activities described in the work plan.
2. The extent to which the applicant describes unique approaches to resolve each anticipated and/or existing challenge.

Criterion 3: EVALUATIVE MEASURES (5 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT CAPACITY](#)

1. The extent to which the program objectives are able to be tracked, measured and evaluated.
2. The clarity and appropriateness of the data collected to inform network activities.

Criterion 4: IMPACT (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [WORK PLAN](#)

1. The clarity and appropriateness of the proposed goals and objectives, the aim(s) the activities are supporting, and the extent to which program activities would result in achieving the proposed goals outlined in the program work plan.
2. The extent to which the application includes a clear work plan that is aligned with the network's goals and objectives. The appropriateness of the work plan in identifying responsible individuals and organizations and a timeline for each activity throughout the one (1)-year period of performance.

Criterion 5: RESOURCES/CAPABILITIES (10 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION](#)

1. The qualifications, appropriateness of the resources, and capability of the applicant organization to meet program and financial requirements. The extent to which the application demonstrates experience serving, or the capacity to serve, rural underserved populations to accomplish project activities.
2. Strength of the network's rural composition demonstrated by at least sixty-six percent (66%), or two-thirds of network members (members with signed Letters of Commitment in **Attachment 7**) of the proposed project be located in a HRSA designated rural area and, applicants should provide the address of each network member and the screenshot of the urban or rural status.
3. Strength and qualifications of the project director who will be responsible for monitoring the program and ensuring award activities are carried out. If the network/program has an interim director, the timeliness and feasibility of the process for hiring a director.

Criterion 6: SUPPORT REQUESTED (5 points) – Corresponds to Section IV's [BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE](#)

The reasonableness of the proposed budget for each year of the period of performance in relation to the objectives and the anticipated results.

1. The extent to which the proposed budget is reasonable in relation to the objectives, the complexity of the activities, and the anticipated results.
2. The extent to which the budget narrative logically and clearly documents how and why each line item request (such as personnel, travel, equipment, supplies, information technology, and contractual services, supports the goals and activities of the proposed award-funded activities.

## 2. Review and Selection Process

The objective review process provides an objective evaluation of applications to the individuals responsible for making award decisions. The highest ranked applications receive consideration for award within available funding ranges. HRSA may also consider assessment of risk and the other pre-award activities described in Section 3 below. See Section 5.3 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide for more details](#). In addition to the ranking based on merit criteria, HRSA approving officials will apply other factors (e.g., geographical distribution) described below in selecting applications for award.

For this program, HRSA will use preferences.

### Funding Preferences

This program provides a funding preference for some applicants, as authorized by 42 U.S.C. 254c(h)(3). Applicants receiving the preference will be placed in a more competitive position among applications that can be funded. Applications that do not receive a funding preference will receive full and equitable consideration during the review process. HRSA staff will determine the funding factor and will grant it to any qualified applicant that demonstrates they meet the criteria for the preference(s) as follows:

#### **Qualification 1: Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)**

You can request funding preference if the service area of the applicant is located in an officially designated health professional shortage area (HPSA). Applicants must include a screenshot or printout from the HRSA Shortage Designation website, which indicates if a particular address is located in a HPSA: <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortagearea/by-address>.

**Qualification 2: Medically Underserved Community/Populations (MUC/MUPs)** You can request funding preference if the applicant is located in a medically underserved community (MUC) or serves medically underserved populations (MUPs). Applicants must include a screenshot or printout from the HRSA Shortage Designation website that indicates if a particular address is located in a MUC or serves an MUP: <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/by-address>.

#### **Qualification 3: Focus on Primary Care, and Wellness and Prevention Strategies**

You can request this funding preference if your program focuses on primary care and wellness and prevention strategies. You must include a brief justification (no more than 3 sentences) describing how your program focuses on primary care and wellness and prevention strategies in **Attachment 8**.

If requesting a funding preference, please indicate which qualification is being met in the **Project Abstract** and **Attachment 8**. HRSA highly recommends that the applicant include this language in the project narrative to identify their funding preference request:

“Applicant organization name is requesting a funding preference based on qualification X. County Y is (in a designated HPSA; or in a MUC/MUP; or is focusing on primary care, and wellness and prevention strategies).”

Please provide documentation of funding preference and label documentation as “Proof of Funding Preference Designation/Eligibility.” See **page 41** of the [HRSA SF-424 Application Guide](#).

You only have to meet **one** of the qualifications stated above to receive the preference. Meeting more than one qualification **does not** increase an applicant’s competitive position.

### **3. Assessment of Risk**

HRSA may elect not to fund applicants with management or financial instability that directly relates to the organization’s ability to implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements ([45 CFR § 75.205](#)).

HRSA reviews applications receiving a favorable objective review for other considerations that include past performance, as applicable; cost analysis of the project/program budget; assessment of your management systems, ensuring continued applicant eligibility; and compliance with any public policy requirements, including those requiring just-in-time submissions. HRSA may ask you to submit additional programmatic or administrative information (such as an updated budget or “other support” information) or to undertake certain activities (such as negotiation of an indirect cost rate) in anticipation of an award. However, even at this point in the process, such requests do not guarantee that HRSA will make an award. Following review of all applicable information, HRSA’s approving and business management officials will determine whether HRSA can make an award, if special conditions are required, and what level of funding is appropriate.

Award decisions are discretionary and are not subject to appeal to any HRSA or HHS official or board.

## **VI. Award Administration Information**

### **1. Award Notices**

HRSA will release the Notice of Award (NOA) on or around the start date of July 1, 2022. See Section 5.4 of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#) for additional information.

### **2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

See Section 2.1 of HRSA’s [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

If you are successful and receive a NOA, in accepting the award, you agree that the award and any activities thereunder are subject to:

- all provisions of 45 CFR part 75, currently in effect or implemented during the period of the award,
- other federal regulations and HHS policies in effect at the time of the award or implemented during the period of award, and
- applicable statutory provisions.

### **Accessibility Provisions and Non-Discrimination Requirements**

Federal funding recipients must comply with applicable federal civil rights laws. HRSA supports its recipients in preventing discrimination, reducing barriers to care, and promoting health equity. Non-discrimination legal requirements for recipients of HRSA federal financial assistance are available at the following address:

<https://www.hrsa.gov/about/organization/bureaus/ocrdi#non-discrimination>. For more information on recipient civil rights obligations, visit the HRSA Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion [website](#).

### **Executive Order on Worker Organizing and Empowerment**

Pursuant to the Executive Order on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, HRSA strongly encourages applicants to support worker organizing and collective bargaining and to promote equality of bargaining power between employers and employees. This may include the development of policies and practices that could be used to promote worker power. Applicants can describe their plans and specific activities to promote this activity in the application narrative.

### **Requirements of Subawards**

The terms and conditions in the NOA apply directly to the recipient of HRSA funds. The recipient is accountable for the performance of the project, program, or activity; the appropriate expenditure of funds under the award by all parties; and all other obligations of the recipient, as cited in the NOA. In general, the requirements that apply to the recipient, including public policy requirements, also apply to subrecipients under awards, and it is the recipient's responsibility to monitor the compliance of all funded subrecipients. See [45 CFR § 75.101 Applicability](#) for more details.

### **Data Rights**

All publications developed or purchased with funds awarded under this notice must be consistent with the requirements of the program. Pursuant to 45 CFR § 75.322(b), the recipient owns the copyright for materials that it develops under an award issued pursuant to this notice, and HHS reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use those materials for federal purposes, and to authorize others to do so. In addition, pursuant to 45 CFR § 75.322(d), the Federal Government has the right to obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use data produced

under this award and has the right to authorize others to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data for federal purposes, e.g., to make it available in government-sponsored databases for use by others. If applicable, the specific scope of HRSA rights with respect to a particular grant-supported effort will be addressed in the NOA. Data and copyright-protected works developed by a subrecipient also are subject to the Federal Government's copyright license and data rights.

## Human Subjects Protection

Federal regulations ([45 CFR part 46](#)) require that applications and proposals involving human subjects must be evaluated with reference to the risks to the subjects, the adequacy of protection against these risks, the potential benefits of the research to the subjects and others, and the importance of the knowledge gained or to be gained. If you anticipate research involving human subjects, you must meet the requirements of the HHS regulations to protect human subjects from research risks.

- Refer to instructions provided in HRSA's [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#), Appendix Supplemental Instructions for Preparing the Protection of Human Subjects Section of the Research Plan and Human Subjects Research Policy for specific instructions on preparing the human subjects section of the application.
- Refer to HRSA's [SF-424 R&R Application Guide](#) to determine if you are required to hold a Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) of compliance from the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) prior to award. You must provide your Human Subject Assurance Number (from the FWA) in the application. If you do not have an assurance, you must indicate in the application that you will obtain one from OHRP prior to award.
- In addition, you must meet the requirements of the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects from research risks, including the following:  
(1) discuss plans to seek IRB approval or exemption; (2) develop all required documentation for submission of research protocol to IRB; (3) communicate with IRB regarding the research protocol; (4) communicate about IRB's decision and any IRB subsequent issues with HRSA.
- IRB approval is not required at the time of application submission but must be received prior to initiation of any activities involving human subjects. Do not use the protection of human subjects section to circumvent any page limitation in the [Methodology](#) portion of the Project Narrative section.

## 3. Reporting

Award recipients must comply with Section 6 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#) and the following reporting and review activities:

- 1) **Performance Measures Report.** A performance measures report is required during the budget period in the Performance Improvement Measurement System (PIMS). FORHP/HRSA developed a set of standard measures, PIMS, to assess the overall impact that FORHP programs have on rural communities and to enhance ongoing quality improvement. Recipients are required to collect, report and analyze data on PIMS through HRSA's Electronic Handbook (EHB) after each budget period. Data collected from PIMS will be aggregated by HRSA to demonstrate the overall impact of the program. Upon award, recipients will be notified of specific performance measures required for reporting.
- 2) **Strategic Plan.** A strategic plan is required during the period of performance in the EHB. The strategic plan should be used as a tool to help the network establish its goals and objectives, identify priority areas, and solutions. It may also include an external environmental scan. Further information will be provided upon receipt of the award.
- 3) **Network Organizational Assessment.** A Network Organizational Assessment is required during the period of performance in the EHB. Further information will be provided upon receipt of the award.
- 4) **Grantee Directory and Source Book.** A Grantee Directory and Source Book is required during the period of performance in the EHB. Further information will be provided upon receipt of the award.
- 5) **Final Programmatic Report.** A Final Programmatic Report is required after the end of the period of performance in the EHB. The strategic plan should be used as a tool to help the network establish its goals and objectives, identify priority areas, and solutions. Further information will be provided upon receipt of the award.

Note that the OMB revisions to Guidance for Grants and Agreements termination provisions located at [2 CFR § 200.340 - Termination](#) apply to all federal awards effective August 13, 2020. No additional termination provisions apply unless otherwise noted.

## VII. Agency Contacts

You may request additional information and/or technical assistance regarding business, administrative, or fiscal issues related to this NOFO by contacting:

Eric Brown  
Grants Management Specialist  
Division of Grants Management Operations, OFAM  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
5600 Fishers Lane, Mailstop 10SWH03  
Rockville, MD 20857  
Telephone: (301) 945-9844  
Email: [ebrown@hrsa.gov](mailto:ebrown@hrsa.gov)

You may request additional information regarding the overall program issues and/or technical assistance related to this NOFO by contacting:

Nkem Osian, MPH  
Public Health Analyst  
Attn: Rural Health Network Development Planning Funding Program  
Federal Office of Rural Health Policy  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857  
Telephone: (301) 443-2751  
Email: [nosian@hrsa.gov](mailto:nosian@hrsa.gov)

You may need assistance when working online to submit your application forms electronically. Always obtain a case number when calling for support. For assistance with submitting the application in Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding federal holidays at:

Grants.gov Contact Center  
Telephone: 1-800-518-4726 (International callers dial 606-545-5035)  
Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)  
[Self-Service Knowledge Base](#)

Successful applicants/recipients may need assistance when working online to submit information and reports electronically through [HRSA's Electronic Handbooks \(EHBs\)](#). Always obtain a case number when calling for support. For assistance with submitting in the EHBs, contact the HRSA Contact Center, Monday–Friday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays at:

HRSA Contact Center  
Telephone: (877) 464-4772 / (877) Go4-HRSA  
TTY: (877) 897-9910  
Web: <http://www.hrsa.gov/about/contact/ehbhelp.aspx>

## **VIII. Other Information**

### **Technical Assistance**

HRSA has scheduled following technical assistance:

#### *Webinar*

Day and Date: Wednesday, November 17, 2021

Time: 3 – 4 p.m. ET

Call-In Number (*if without computer access or computer audio*): 1-833-568-8864

Meeting ID: 161 864 4747

Participant Code: 81822150

Weblink: <https://hrsa.gov.zoomgov.com/j/1618644747?pwd= SXIUbUpSTjVoZS93UUpWM3hMWjdDUT09>

NOTE: This webinar will be recorded and playback information can be requested at [NOsian@hrsa.gov](mailto:NOsian@hrsa.gov)

### **Tips for Writing a Strong Application**

See Section 4.7 of HRSA's [SF-424 Application Guide](#).

## Appendix A: Pre-Application Planning Advice

- a. Successful applicants have shared that an effective strategy in their pre-application planning process was to involve all parties having a stake in their program. HRSA urges significant community involvement in the program from the very beginning. You should work closely with community representatives and organizations that will be affected by the programs or involved with its implementation.
  - Community involvement can be accomplished with town meetings, focus groups, surveys, and other appropriate techniques. This engagement will help identify and reach consensus on community needs that will be addressed by the program. Community representatives and participating organizations should also be involved in setting the specific goals for the program and in decisions on the allocation of award resources.
- b. Programs that bring together multiple sources of support are encouraged. If other resources are available or anticipated (e.g., federal, state, philanthropic, etc.), it will strengthen the sustainability of the program. HRSA is interested in developing strategies to address the health care needs of underserved populations that can be adapted to other rural communities around the country.
- c. Network Development Planning awards require substantive participation by at least three different health care provider organizations. Many applications fail to establish a meaningful and substantive role for each member of the network, which results in the application receiving a less than satisfactory rating. All network members must be fully involved in the proposed program and all must work together to achieve the program goals.
- d. Applications that delay planning, consensus building and approval by appropriate consortium members until close to the application deadline may risk the appearance that the program does not have sufficient commitment by all network members. This weakness could jeopardize a positive review of the application. Assure your community and network members are involved from the start and final signatures are secured well before the application deadline. With the electronic submission process, signed copies of letters of commitment can be scanned for upload.
- e. Prepare a complete budget for the full duration of your period of performance. Your budget narrative should explain how the funds will be spent. The budget narrative must link back to the activities of the proposed program.

- f. Examples of planning activities within the legislative aim(s) #1, #2, and #3 are:
- **Aim #1: Achieve efficiencies:** Planning activities may include, but are not limited to:
    - Conducting a community health and/or provider needs assessments at the regional and/or local level:
      - Develop and implement a needs assessment in the community;
        - a. Identify the most critical need of network partners to ensure their viability;
      - Identify additional collaborating network partners in the community/region;
      - Identify and develop a plan to address workforce issues; or
      - Identify financial resources or gaps available to support services.
    - Updating a health information technology plan, which helps to improve outcomes for rural patients, based on the current standards of care, reporting enhancements and/or capacity.
    - Identifying a plan for developing regional systems of care to better meet rural patient concerns.
    - Identifying opportunities for the network to better address regional and/or local population health needs.
  - **Aim #2: Expand access to, coordinate, and improve the quality of basic health care services:** Planning activities may include, but are not limited to:
    - Developing a network business and/or operations plan, which may include:
      - A formal memorandum of agreement or understanding (MOA/MOU);
      - A shared mission statement;
      - A network/governance board or decision making structure;
      - A set of network bylaws;
      - The roles and responsibilities of the network partners; or a business model.
    - Identifying the degree to which the network members are ready to integrate their functions and share clinical and/or administrative resources.
    - Assessing appropriateness/readiness for Patient Centered Medical Home accreditation.
    - Identifying strategies to communicate with the community about changes in the health care landscape and how to maintain access to viable health care services.
    - Developing a plan to expand the role of emergency medical services within the community, including loss of services as a result of a hospital closure/conversion.
  - **Aim #3: Strengthen the rural health care system as a whole:** Planning activities may include, but are not limited to:
    - Identifying ways to encourage cross-organizational collaboration and leadership commitment.
    - Assessing the network's sustainability and viability.

- Identifying and establishing ways to obtain regional and/or local community support/buy-in around the development of the network.
- Identify a strategy to leverage broadband connectivity to support health information technology applications in rural communities.

## Appendix B: Common Definitions

For the purpose of this notice of funding opportunity, the following terms are defined:

**Budget Period** – An interval of time into which the period of performance is divided for budgetary and funding purposes.

**Direct Services** - A documented interaction between a patient/client and a clinical or non-clinical health professional. Examples of direct services include (but are not limited to) patient visits, counseling and education. This includes both face-to-face in-person encounters as well as non-face-to-face encounters.

**Equipment** – Tangible nonexpendable personal property that has a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit or the capitalization threshold established by the recipient, whichever is less. See Section 45 CFR 75.320.

**Equity** - [T]he consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.<sup>7</sup>

**NOTE:** Addressing issues of equity should include an understanding of intersectionality and how multiple forms of discrimination impact individuals' lived experiences. Individuals and communities often belong to more than one group that has been historically underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Individuals at the nexus of multiple identities often experience unique forms of discrimination or systemic disadvantages, including in their access to needed services.<sup>8</sup>

**Governing Board** – A nonprofit board made up primarily of representatives of the organizations participating in the network, to ensure they control decisions regarding network activities, programmatic decisions, and finances. The body should include representation from **all** network member organizations. An already-existing nonprofit board of individuals convened for providing oversight to a single organization is **not** an appropriate board structure.

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<sup>7</sup> Executive Order 13985 on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 86 FR 7009, at § 2(a) (Jan. 20, 2021), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-01-25/pdf/2021-01753.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> See Executive Order 13988 on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, 86 FR 2023, at § 1 (Jan. 20, 2021), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-01-25/pdf/2021-01761.pdf>.

**Health Care Provider** – Health care providers are defined as: hospitals, public health agencies, home health providers, mental health centers, substance abuse service providers, rural health clinics, primary care providers, oral health providers, social service agencies, health profession schools, local school districts, emergency services providers, community and migrant health centers, federally qualified health centers, tribal health programs, churches, and civic organizations that are/will be providing health related services.

**Health Information Technology** – The electronic storage of records, electronic billing, electronic ordering of tests and procedures, and even a shared, interoperable network to allow providers to communicate with one another.

**Horizontal Network** – A network composed of the same type of health care provider, e.g., all hospitals or all community health centers as one network.

**Hospital Closure** – The cessation of general, short-term, acute inpatient care within the past three years.

**Hospital Conversion** – A former hospital that now provides a mix of health services, but no inpatient care. Converted facilities could provide urgent care, rehabilitation, primary care, skilled nursing care, etc.

**Integrated Health Care Network** – A formal organizational arrangement among at least three regional or local health care organizations that comes together to plan and develop strategies for improving health services in a community.

**Memorandum of Agreement** – The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is a written document that must be signed by all network member CEOs, Board Chairs or tribal authorities to signify their formal commitment as network members. An acceptable MOA must describe the network purpose and activities in general; member responsibilities in terms of financial contribution, participation, and voting; and membership benefits.

**Network Director** – An individual designated by the award recipient institution to direct the project or program being supported by the award. The Network Director is responsible and accountable to the recipient organization officials for the proper conduct of the project or program. The entity (organization) is, in turn, legally responsible and accountable to HRSA and HHS for the performance and financial aspects of the award supported activity. The interim Network Director may be employed by or under contract to the award recipient organization. The permanent Network Director may be under contract to the award recipient and the contractual agreement must be explained.

**Nonprofit** – Any entity that is a corporation or association of which no part of the net earnings may benefit private shareholders or individuals and is identified as nonprofit by the IRS.

**Notice of Award** – The legally binding document that serves as a notification to the recipient and others that grant funds have been awarded, contains or references all terms of the award and documents the obligation of federal funds in the HHS accounting system.

**Program** – All proposed activities specified in a grant application as approved for funding.

**Period of Performance** – The total time for which support of a discretionary project/program has been approved. A period of performance may consist of one or more budget periods. The total period of performance comprises the original period of performance and any extension periods.

**Recipient** – An entity, usually but not limited to non-federal entities, that receives a federal award directly from a federal awarding agency to carry out an activity under a federal program. The term recipient does not include sub recipients.

**Rural** – All counties that are not designated as parts of Metropolitan Areas (MAs) by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are considered rural. In addition, HRSA uses the Rural Urban Commuting Area Codes (RUCAs), developed by the WWAMI Rural Research Center at the University of Washington and the Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service, to designate “Rural” areas within MAs.

<https://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/tools/analyzers/geo/Rural.aspx>

**Rural Hospital** – Any short-term, general, acute, non-federal hospital that is not located in a metropolitan county, is located in a RUCA type 4 or higher, or is a Critical Access Hospital.

**State** – Includes, in addition to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

**Telehealth** – The use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies<sup>1</sup> to support remote clinical services<sup>2</sup> and remote non-clinical services<sup>3</sup>.

1. *Telecommunication technologies* include but are not limited to: mobile health, video conferencing (with or without video), digital photography, store-and-forward/asynchronous imaging, streaming media, wireless communication, telephone calls, remote patient monitoring through electronic devices such as wearables, mobile devices, smartphone apps; internet-enabled computers, specialty portals or platforms that enable secure electronic messaging and/or audio or video communication between providers or staff and patients not including EMR/EHR systems;
2. *Remote clinical services* include but are not limited to: telemedicine, physician consulting, screening and intake, diagnosis and monitoring, treatment and prevention, patient and professional health-related education, and other medical decisions or services for a patient
3. *Remote non-clinical services* include but are not limited to: provider and health professionals training, research and evaluation, the continuation of medical education, online information and education resources, individual mentoring and instruction, health care administration including video conferences for managers of integrated health systems, utilization and quality monitoring;

NOTE: If a telecommunication technology, remote clinical or remote non-clinical service is missing, please reach out to your PO for further clarification.

**Tribal Government** – Includes all federally-recognized tribes and state-recognized tribes.

**Tribal Organization** – Includes an entity authorized by a tribal government or consortia of tribal governments.

**Underserved Communities** – [The] populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of ‘equity.’<sup>9</sup>

**Vertical Network** – A network composed of a variety of health care provider types, e.g., a hospital, rural health clinic, and public health department.

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<sup>9</sup> Executive Order 13985, at § 2(b).

## Appendix C: Useful Resources

Several sources, including those listed below, offer data and information that will help you in preparing the application. Any source listed below does not constitute or imply an endorsement by HRSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The views and opinions expressed in any referenced link or document do not necessarily reflect those of HRSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

### **Academy for Health Services Research and Health Policy/ Robert Wood Johnson's Networking for Rural Health**

- Reference material available at the website, which includes:
  - Strategic Planning for Rural Health Networks Website:  
<https://www.ruralcenter.org/resource-library/report-strategic-planning-for-rural-health-networks>
  - Rural Health Network Profile Tool Website:  
<https://www.ruralcenter.org/resource-library/rural-health-network-profile-tool>
  - The Science and Art of Business Planning for Rural Health Networks Website:  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.199.6566&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
  - Shared Services: The Foundation of Collaboration Website:  
<https://www.ruralcenter.org/resource-library/shared-services-the-foundation-of-collaboration>
  - Formal Rural Health Networks: A Legal Primer Website:  
<https://www.ruralcenter.org/resource-library/forming-rural-health-networks-a-legal-primer>

### **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality**

Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

Website: <https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/improve/precautions/toolkit.html>

### **Community Health Systems Development team of the Georgia Health Policy Center**

Offers a library of resources on topics such as collaboration, network infrastructure and strategic planning.

Website: <http://ruralhealthlink.org/Resources/ResourceLibrary.aspx>

### **Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**

Resource for Health Literacy

Website: <https://health.gov/our-work/health-literacy/health-literate-care-model>

## **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)**

Health Resources and Services Administration

Offers links to helpful data sources including state health department sites, which often offer data.

Website: <http://www.hrsa.gov>

## **HRSA Data Warehouse**

View the abstracts of previous Network Planning Grant award recipients.

Website: <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/rural-health>

Instructions: View Tools → Find Grants → Filter → Program Areas: Rural Health → Program Name: Rural Health Network Development Planning Program (P10) → Submit

## **Kaiser Family Foundation**

Resource for data and information.

Website: <http://www.kff.org>

## **Maternal and Child Health Data System**

Offers data, sorted by state, on services to women and children.

Website: <https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/>

**National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO):** Provides a guide that demonstrates how building partnerships among local health departments, community health centers, health care organizations, offices of rural health, hospitals, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector is essential to meet the needs of rural communities.

Website:

[http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/framework/clearinghouse/upload/MobilizingCommunityPartnerships\\_7-29.pdf](http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/framework/clearinghouse/upload/MobilizingCommunityPartnerships_7-29.pdf)

## **National Center for Health Statistics**

Provides statistics for the different populations.

Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>

## **Rural Health Research Gateway**

Provides access to projects and publications of the HRSA-funded Rural Health Research Centers, 1997-present.

Website: <http://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/>

## **Technical Assistance and Services Center**

Provides information on the rural hospital flexibility and network resource tools. Website:

<http://www.ruralcenter.org/tasc>

### **Telehealth Resource Centers (TRCs)**

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy supports TRCs, which provide assistance, education and information to organizations and individuals who are actively providing or interested in providing medical care in remote areas.

Website: <https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/>

### **The Rural Health Information Hub (RHI Hub)**

The RHI Hub is a national resource for rural health and human services information.

Website: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org>

- Rural Health Networks and Coalitions Toolkit:

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/networks>

### **University of Minnesota (UMN) Rural Health Research Center**

The HRSA-funded Rural Health Research Center at the University of Minnesota has conducted a number of policy briefs on the Rural Health Network Development Planning Program. Policy briefs include topics such as: barriers and facilitators of success, race and rurality, and trends in network focus areas.

Website: <https://www.ruralhealthresearch.org/projects>