



TENNESSEE

RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

Community Kickoff | March 31, 2026



Webinar Purpose

This webinar will provide an overview of the Tennessee Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program, outline upcoming RFP opportunities, and offer guidance and resources to help organizations and communities prepare to engage with the program.



Housekeeping

- This Webinar is being recorded
- Please submit questions to RuralHealth@TN.gov
- Slides will be shared following the webinar

FAQs, application materials, and additional information can be found here: www.tn.gov/health/rural



Stevens Amendment Disclaimer

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Today's Agenda

- 1 | • Intro & Purpose
- 2 | • RHTP Background
- 3 | • Competitive Overview
- 4 | • Funding and Scoring
- 5 | • Application Process
- 6 | • FAQs, Closing, and Next Steps



Acknowledgements

Governor Bill Lee

Legislative Leadership

TennCare

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

TN Dept of Health

Community Partners



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Background on Rural Health Transformation

Vision for Rural Health in Tennessee

We envision a system of care that honors the independence of our small towns while connecting them to trusted partnerships, modern technology, and shared purpose to bring

“Better Care, Closer to Home.”



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The Opportunity

**89 of 95
Counties**

Considered "Rural"

*Shelby, Madison, Davidson
Knox, Hamilton, Sullivan
are considered metro counties*

- The **Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program** is a \$50 billion opportunity, administered by the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)**
- States have applied for ~\$1 billion to **expand access, improve care, and strengthen local health systems** in rural communities over five years.
- CMS will distribute awarded funds over **five budget periods**. States applied for \$200m in budget period one
 - Based on the competitive portions of our application, Tennessee was awarded **\$206.9m** for budget period one.



Aligning Tennessee Strategies



**RHTP
Program
Eligibility**

**Gov. Lee
Funding
Priorities**

**Legislative
Plans &
Priorities**

**TN Rural
Healthcare
Task Force**

Tennessee's Rural Health Transformation Program

TN



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RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

The Big Picture

CMS Strategic Pillars of Rural Health Transformation

Sustainable Access

Strengthen rural providers as sustainable access points by enhancing efficiency and collaboration with regional systems in care delivery, technology, and emergency services.

Innovative Care

Promote innovative care models and payment strategies that improve outcomes, coordinate services, and shift care to more efficient, cost-effective settings

Tech Innovation

Advance digital health by expanding telehealth, improving data sharing and cybersecurity, and supporting adoption of emerging healthcare technologies.

Make Rural America Healthy Again

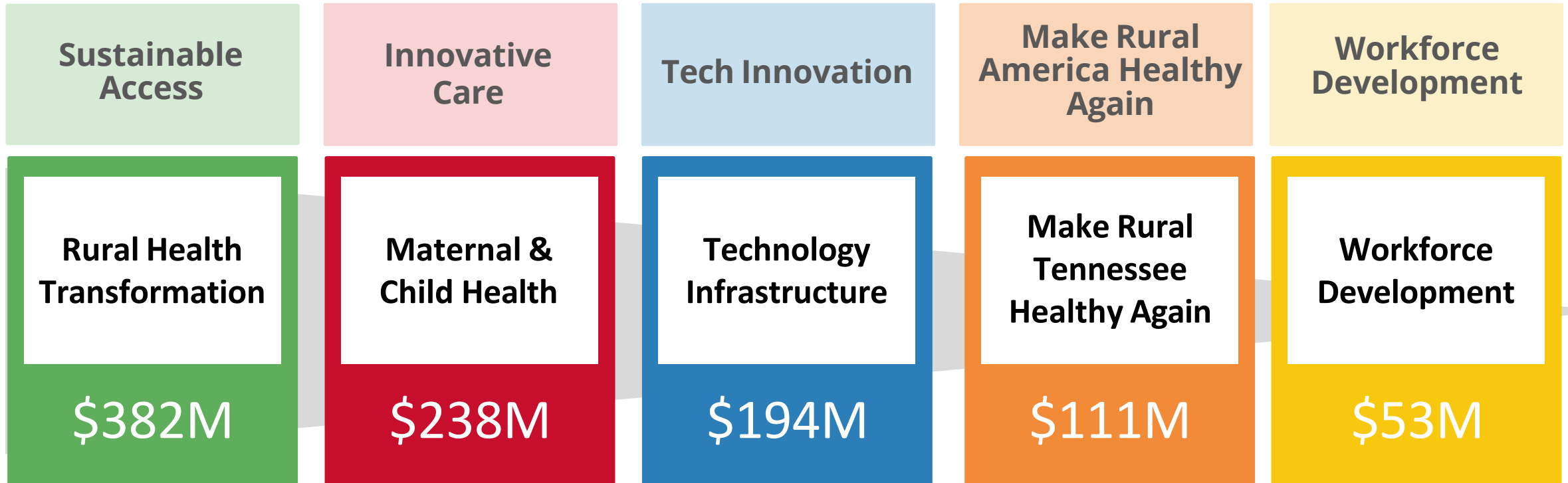
Advance rural health by expanding access and promoting prevention through evidence-based interventions in chronic disease management, behavioral health, and prenatal care

Workforce Development

Recruit and retain skilled healthcare providers, health workers, and pharmacists in rural communities to meet local access needs.

Tennessee RHTF: Five Focus Areas

CMS Strategic Pillars of Rural Health Transformation



*Appx. \$1 Billion over five years, pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount





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Competitive Grant Overview

Healthcare Resiliency Program

Rural Community Grants

RHTP Competitive Opportunities

Health Resiliency Program (HRP)

The Healthcare Resiliency Program (HRP) is a proven competitive grant model that has been used to help Tennessee providers deliver integrated, innovate care delivery and improve access to health-related services for rural populations

Grant Opportunities

- Service Line Expansion and Co-Location
- Maternal and Child Health
- Make Rural TN Healthy Again
- Rural Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
- Health-Tech Innovation



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Service Expansion & Co-Location

Primary Objective: Expand integrated primary, social service, non-profit, specialty, behavioral, and diagnostic services in sustainable rural models.

Strategic Focus Area: Rural Health Transformation

Total Amount Available

\$95m*

Who Should Apply

- Hospitals
- Rural Clinics
- NGOs who want to co-locate clinical and/or social services

Estimated Timeline

Anticipated RFP Spring of 2026



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Maternal and Child Health

Primary Objective: Strengthen maternal and child health systems of care through expansion of services, targeted interventions, training, education, and access to quality care.

Strategic Focus Area: Maternal and Child Health

Total Amount Available

\$97m*

Who Should Apply

- Hospitals, clinics, or FQHCs
- Non-profits or CBOs
- Birthing centers
- Schools
- Childcare centers

Estimated Timeline

Anticipated RFP Spring of 2026



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Health-Tech Innovation

Primary Objective: Advance clinical care through technology by implementing modern electronic health records, expanding remote and centralized patient monitoring (including eICU and mobile telemetry), integrating AI-supported clinical workflows, and strengthening data interoperability.

Strategic Focus Area: Technology Infrastructure

Total Amount Available

\$92m*

**Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Who Should Apply

- Hospitals & HC Systems
- Rural Clinics & networks
- Associations
- Vendors w/
established rural partners

Estimated Timeline

Anticipated RFP Spring of 2026



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Make Rural Tennessee Healthy Again

Primary Objective: Advance rural health by expanding community based supports for the social drivers of health, strengthening healthy food systems, and advancing other locally-identified prevention initiatives.

Strategic Focus Area: Make Rural Tennessee Healthy Again

Total Amount Available

\$50m*

**Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Who Should Apply

- Community based orgs
- Non-Profits
- Non-Clinical entities focused on SDOH (housing, nutrition, physical activity)

Estimated Timeline

Anticipated RFP Spring of 2026



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Rural Non-Emergency Medical

Primary Objective: Bridge the distance between health and home by transforming how rural Tennesseans can access primary, preventive, and specialty care.

Strategic Focus Area: Make Rural Tennessee Healthy Again

Total Amount Available

\$9m*

**Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Who Should Apply

- Businesses specialized in transportation
- Critical access facilities
- Non-profits
- Healthcare orgs

Estimated Timeline

Anticipated RFP Spring of 2026



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

TennCare Shared Savings: RHTP Capital Expenses

Primary Objective: Support rural healthcare providers with direct Capital Investments to improve Rural Health access.

Strategic Focus Area: Rural Health Transformation

Total Amount Available

\$~104m*

Who Should Apply

- Rural Hospitals and Healthcare Systems
- Rural clinics
- Health and healthcare service providers

Estimated Timeline

Contingent on Legislative actions, FY2027



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**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending legislative approval*

Healthcare Resiliency Program

Healthcare Resiliency: Which one should I apply for?

What is the primary goal of your project?

- Expanding or modernizing clinical services or facilities?
→ Service Expansion & Co-Location
- Improving maternal, infant, or child health outcomes?
→ Maternal & Child Health (MCH)
- Preventing chronic disease or addressing community SDOH?
→ MaRTHA (Make Rural Tennessee Healthy Again)
- Using technology to improve care delivery or coordination?
→ Tech Infrastructure
- Reducing transportation or travel barriers to care?
→ Transportation



Example 1:

The **Primary Goal** of our project is to add behavioral health capacity to a primary care clinic in a rural setting. The project will support staff (eligible), equipment (eligible), and minor modifications to the existing facilities (eligible).

or

The **Primary Goal** of our project is to make minor modifications to an existing facility to provide a new specialty clinical service to a rural population.

→ **Service Expansion & Co-Location**

Example 2:

The **Primary Goal** of our project is to purchase and staff a mobile unit that provides prenatal and postnatal screening and services for women and infants.

or

The **Primary Goal** of our project is to support school-based clinical health programs, such as school nursing.

→ **Maternal and Child Health**



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

Example 3:

The **Primary Goal** of our project is to reduce substance use disorder and address adult mental health utilizing an evidence-based peer-network model.

or

The **Primary Goal** of our project is to address housing-for-health, as a non-clinical social driver of health, identified as a priority need by our local County Health Council.

→ **Make Rural TN Healthy Again**



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

Example 4:

The **Primary Goal** of our is to reduce documentation burden by deploying ambient AI systems in rural clinics that automatically capture and summarize patient–provider conversations in real time

or

The **Primary Goal** of our project is to improve billing accuracy and accelerate reimbursement by deploying an AI-powered coding and claims platform that integrates with rural clinic EHRs to automatically generate, validate, and submit compliant billing data

→ **Technology Infrastructure**



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Healthcare Resiliency Program

RHT Competitive Opportunities

Rural Community Grants

Rural community health grants typically support initiatives that expand access to essential health services, strengthen local healthcare infrastructure and capacity, and address persistent disparities through preventive care and community-based programs tailored to the unique needs of rural populations

Grant Opportunities

- Active Living Planning Grants
- Nutrition Security Grants
- CARE Grants for County Health Councils
- Workforce Development Grants

Active Living Planning Grants

Primary Objective: To support rural Tennessee communities in implementing Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) strategies that improve nutrition security, increase physical activity, and reduce chronic disease risk.

Strategic Focus Area: Make Rural Tennessee Healthy Again

Total Amount Available

\$20m*

Who Should Apply

- Local governments (including school boards)
- Non-profit agencies

Estimated Timeline

RFA expected Spring of 2026 with subsequent annual RFA's at the beginning of each year through 2029.



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Community Grants

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Nutrition Security Grants

Primary Objective: To support rural Tennessee communities in implementing Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) strategies that improve nutrition security, increase physical activity, and reduce chronic disease risk.

Strategic Focus Area: Make Rural Tennessee Healthy Again

Total Amount Available

\$18m*

Cat A – \$1.5m Total/County

Cat B – \$1m Total/County

Who Should Apply

- Non-profit and CBOs
- Rural hospitals / HC systems
- Health councils
- School districts
- Municipalities
- Other entities

Estimated Timeline

RFA in early Summer
2026



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Community Grants

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

CARE Grants for Community Health

Primary Objective: To build long-term rural health capacity by empowering County Health Councils to implement community-led improvements aligned with their Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) priorities.

Strategic Focus Area: Make Rural Tennessee Healthy Again

Total Amount Available

\$5m*

Who Should Apply

- Tennessee County Health Councils (or their designated fiscal agents)

Estimated Timeline

Anticipated RFP in Fall 2026



Community Grants

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*

Workforce Development Grants

Primary Objective: These funds support student exposure to the healthcare workforce, educational opportunities and supports to train in rural healthcare settings, and innovation to support healthcare teams and businesses.

Strategic Focus Area: Workforce Development

Total Amount Available

Variable*

Who Should Apply

- Institutions of higher education
- Healthcare training programs
- Healthcare businesses and delivery sites

Estimated Timeline

Multiple opportunities with RFPs forthcoming in 2026



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Community Grants

**Total amount reflects funds across 5 years - Pending annual recalculation of workload funding amount*



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Funding & Scoring

Grant Basics

- Most grants will be five year agreements
- RFA open: 60-90 days
- Internal Review: 30-60 days
- Awards and Contracting Process: **Must be obligated by Fri. October 30, 2026**
- Reimbursement-based grants

- Applications will be scored out of 100 points;
 - 35 points: Community Need
 - 35 points: Project Quality
 - 10 points: Sustainability
 - 10 points: Evaluation plan
 - 10 points: Budget

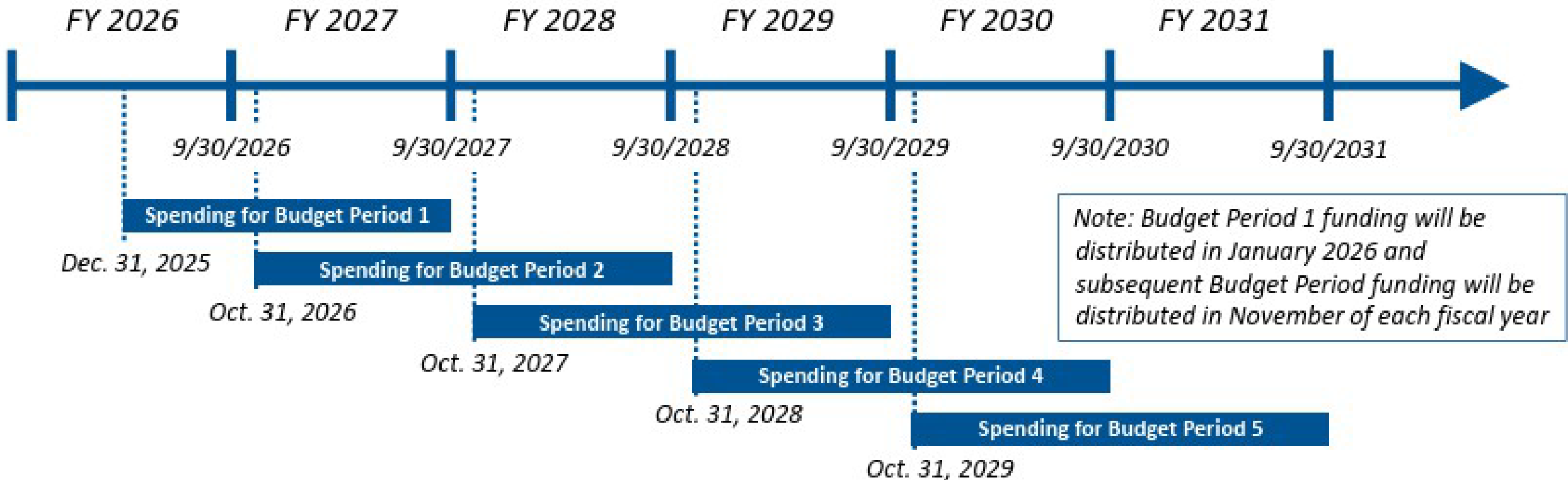


Ineligible Uses of Funds within RHTP

<u>Ineligible Uses of Funds</u>
New or Major Construction
Loan Repayment
Provider payments (<15%)
Intergovernmental Transfers
Certain Limits on EMR Replacement
Certain Limits on Clinician Salaries
Lobbying
Supplanting existing staff or services
Meals (except very limited, approved circumstances)

Timeline for Tennessee RHTP Spending

*Projects have until the following fiscal year to spend allocated funds



CMS Spending Expectations

Budget Period	Beginning	Spending Deadline
BP1 (FFY2026)	December 29, 2025	September 30, 2027
BP2 (FFY2027)	October 31, 2026	September 30, 2028
BP3 (FFY2028)	October 31, 2027	September 30, 2029
BP4 (FFY2029)	October 31, 2028	September 30, 2030
BP5 (FFY2030)	October 31, 2029	September 30, 2031



Notes on Compliance

- Administrative costs are **capped at 10%**
- **Document everything**
- **Do not begin spending** until contract is completed and signed
- State reports to CMS and provide monitoring of budgets and program activities on a quarterly and annual basis
 - Includes narrative progress reports, workplan updates, use of funds, success stories, sustainability plan progress, and supporting evidence
 - Annual detail is expected within project budgets
- Funding for budget periods 2-5 is **contingent on program progress**





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Application Process

Application Process

- Application instructions and supporting materials will be available via TDH website in the upcoming weeks
- Standard state processes and procedures will apply to competitive programs within RHTP
- Vendors must register as an entity with the Secretary of State's Office
- Register with SAM.gov
- Applications will be submitted and managed using TDHs grant management system, CASPIO
- CASPIO will serve as the management and tracking system in the award phase



Application Required Items

Application Checklist

- Project Summary
- Project Narrative
 - Community need and target rural population
 - Proposed project goals and strategies, workplan, and description of how project is aligned with TN priorities
 - Proposed plan for engaging communities, cross-sector partners, and local health departments and health councils
- Evaluation Plan
- Sustainability Plan
- Budget Narrative

A Strong Application Will Demonstrate...

- ❑ Fidelity to the goals and outcomes stated in Tennessee's RHT Program
- ❑ How rural populations are served, including those who are low-income or under-served
- ❑ High levels of engagement with community stakeholders (Health Councils, patients, cross-sector partnerships)
- ❑ An ability to meaningfully address community-identified needs
- ❑ Transformative impact, and sustainability beyond the performance period



Awardees should expect to:

- Participate in Tennessee's Health Information Exchange (if eligible)
- Engage with TN Community Compass (if eligible)
- Provide annual updates to their local County Health Council
- Seek opportunities to connect with existing TN RHT projects
- Be provided with support and technical assistance from the TDH team throughout the process



Tentative Timeline for Most Competitive Opportunities

Applications Open

Late Spring 2026

Expected Award Date

Late Summer /
Early Fall 2026

Summer 2026

Application
Submission Deadline

Submit via CASPIO

Sept 30, 2027

End of Budget Period
One Spending



**Official dates and deadlines are forthcoming*





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Closing and Next Steps

Summary

What we know...

- Target measures within RHTP application
- Priority Areas for CMS and TN
- Competitive buckets
- Funding amount for Budget Period one

What we don't...

- Which transformative, innovative ideas Tennessee communities will focus on
- Funding for Budget Periods two - five



Helpful Resources

Tennessee's Transformation Plan

Rural Health Transformation

Approved Uses of Funding

FAQs

Application Timeline

Tennessee's Rural Health Task Force

TDH Engagement

A Future of Better Care, Closer to Home

Tennessee's rural communities are the heart of the state's economy, culture, and identity. The federal **Rural Health Transformation Program** (RHTP) presents Tennessee with a historic opportunity to improve healthcare access, quality, and outcomes in our rural communities for generations to come.

Tennessee's RHTP plan is foundational building a locally-led model for how rural America can become healthy, vibrant, and self-sustaining, and bring **Better Care, Closer to Home**.

The **Tennessee THTP Plan** proposes investment that reverses rural hospital decline, extends care access, modernizes technology, and strengthens local economies, while improving outcomes for mothers, children, and older adults.

→ See Gov. Lee's Announcement of Tennessee's Proposal Submission



Link: www.tn.gov/health/rural

Questions? Please reach out! Email: RuralHealth@tn.gov



Next Steps

- Slides and recording will be shared with participants who have signed up for this webinar
- Participants will be notified of future FAQ updates and webinar opportunities
- Precise RFA dates will be released in the upcoming weeks
- Please stay tuned to tn.gov/health/rural and submit questions via RuralHealth@tn.gov



Thank you for attending this webinar.

We look forward to working with you to transform rural health in Tennessee!



