



Workforce Webinar

May 2026

Webinar Q&A

Q1. I am wondering if the five-year commitment will allow someone who starts in one apprenticeship certification to continue along a pathway which allows them to upscale and improve over the five years, or do they have to STAY in the original "job" for all five years

Response: Participants who receive an individual financial incentive with Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) funds will need to complete a five-year service commitment in a health career in a rural community in the state of Montana. Participants may change employers but must continue to serve a rural population in a health occupation in Montana. Participants must notify DLI of employment change to confirm that the new employment meets the terms of the service commitment.

The service commitment provision is a requirement of federal law and is subject to approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Q2. Can you talk a little more about any need for additional public health credentialing/certificate programs at the undergraduate or graduate level? How does the Center of Excellence figure in? Should we apply to the Center of Excellence or in response to forthcoming RFPs?

Response: The Workforce Initiative of the RHTP is intended to support rural communities by developing a sustainable, clinical health workforce that serves the needs of those communities. As such, program funds are available for training and recruitment in medical, dental, behavioral, or public health occupations, so long as the participants serve a rural community in the state of Montana for at least five years. Rural communities will have a considerable

voice in determining which occupations matter most to strengthening the local health workforce in their region.

Montana's RHTP application does include a number of priority occupations that will be a focus of statewide workforce efforts. Those occupations are physicians, advanced practice providers (NPs, APRNs, CRNAs, CNMW, CNS, and PAs), registered nurses, dental hygienists, and emergency care providers (EMR, EMT, AEMT, paramedic). Montana will track progress on those occupations on an annual basis and report to CMS as a performance metric.

However, funding for clinical workforce training programs under the RHTP grant are not limited to those occupations and can include public health careers if communities prioritize those occupations in partnership with DLI.

The Center of Excellence under the RHTP grant falls under a separate initiative. Stakeholders who are interested in workforce funds should follow announcements on ruralhealth.mt.gov for upcoming funding opportunities.

Q3. Would love to hear if/how we might combat the fact that Grad Plus loans are being eliminated; Social Workers, Nurses, PAs, etc. are no longer professional degrees, so now people without a lot of money cannot afford to go to school for these things. Am also curious if this expands into healthcare workers that are not employed directly by the state, like Medicaid Passport Providers that are private practice?

Response: Initiative 1 of Montana's RHTP is designed to build a robust, sustainable health care workforce in rural and frontier communities. The program has no connection with federal student loan programs nor is it designed to supplement federal student aid. The workforce initiative for RHTP is available to all Montanans interested in a rural health career and is not limited to state employees or health care workers employed by the state.

Q4. What about OT/PT/SLP for both hospital/clinic and school settings? There is a significant shortage of these professions in our rural, frontier and tribal communities.

Response: Occupational Therapists (OT), Physical therapists (PT), Physical therapist assistants (PTAs), and Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are eligible occupations under the workforce initiatives of Montana's RHTP. They are formally recognized in the state's rural workforce programs and are supported through federal and state rural health transformation goals.

Q5: How will health profession educators be surveyed?

Response: Survey responses were previously sought from employers, regarding in-demand occupations, local priorities, and local labor market definitions. Health educators – K-12 and post-secondary – should engage with the local sector partnerships that will be established based on survey responses to shape workforce strategies.

Q6: Are funds available for undergraduate Radiologic Technologists and Public Health students for academic degree completion and clinical training/apprenticeships/internships?

Response: RHTP funding is available to expand existing programs and develop new programs. Students currently enrolled in an education or training program would not be eligible for funding. New students enrolling in an education or training program may be eligible, and institutions seeking to expand programs or create new programs may also be eligible.

Q7: AMA has worked in the space of burnout and well-being for years, surveys and tools. Baseline data is available. We ran a pilot in Montana and launched SafeHaven for behavioral health services for health care professionals. Enthused about the effort!

Response: Thank you for this comment. DLI will be seeking partners to help define a mental wellbeing/burnout metric and track outcomes against it. Please [periodically visit the website ruralhealth.mt.gov](http://ruralhealth.mt.gov) for more information.

Q8. We operated the Next Nurse program, a DOL Nursing Expansion grant. Would employers that are currently utilizing our funds for their employees who are in an apprentice tract be considered ineligible for RHTP funding?

Response: That is correct – RHTP funding can only be utilized for new or expanded apprenticeship programs or new apprentices.

Q9. Thank you for this information! What will the funding application/award process look like? Do we have information about timelines?

Response: Funding opportunities will be made available on an ongoing basis. Please [periodically visit the website ruralhealth.mt.gov](https://ruralhealth.mt.gov) and sign up for the Interested Parties list.

Q10. Thanks for holding this webinar, Commissioner Swanson and team. Greatly appreciated. Would a network potentially become a part of the solution and work once the surveys are completed and the Regional Health Sectors "communities" are identified and/or defined? Or potentially when could we be a part of the solution around this work from our experience and expertise that we have gained over the years?

Response: Once the pilot communities are identified, stakeholders can engage locally as appropriate to make this project successful.

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