

Application Guide and Frequently Asked Questions



Rural Health Clinic Rural Data Integration and Infrastructure Fund Michigan Center for Rural Health | Rural Health Transformation Program

Application Process Overview

1. Review this Application Guide and Frequently Asked Questions, the Eligible and Ineligible Uses of Funds Guide, and the Rural Data Integration and Infrastructure Fund Application.
2. Attend the informational webinar on October 9th, 2026 at 11 am.
3. Complete and submit the application by October 30, 2026.
4. Applications will be reviewed using the eligibility, program priority, and selection criteria described in these application materials.
5. Award notifications will be issued to selected Certified Rural Health Clinics.
6. Selected clinics will complete a readiness assessment and work with MCRH to confirm cohort fit and finalize a site-specific workplan, performance measures, implementation approach, and budget.
7. An agreement must be fully executed before approved grant-funded activities and expenditures begin.
8. MCRH will provide ongoing technical assistance, shared learning opportunities, implementation support, monitoring, and reporting guidance throughout the funding period.

About This Opportunity

The Michigan Center for Rural Health (MCRH) will award grant funding and provide implementation support to selected Rural Health Clinics through a competitive grant funding process for the **Rural Data Integration and Infrastructure Fund**.

This opportunity is designed to help RHCs strengthen interoperability, digital infrastructure, data integration, connectivity, and administrative efficiency. Projects will support improved care coordination, more effective information exchange, and reduced administrative burden. The Rural Data Integration and Infrastructure Fund includes two cohorts. Applicants will select the cohort that best aligns with their current infrastructure, identified needs, and proposed project. MCRH can provide guidance before application submission, and selected clinics will complete a readiness assessment to help confirm cohort fit and guide implementation.

- **Data Integration Cohort:** For clinics seeking to strengthen health information exchange, community information exchange, referral infrastructure, social care coordination, and related clinical and administrative workflows.
- **Innovative Tools Cohort:** For clinics seeking to improve billing, coding, documentation, prior authorization, revenue cycle, automation, or other administrative workflows through innovative technology.

Participating clinics will develop projects based on local and community needs while addressing required program priorities. MCRH will provide individualized technical assistance to support assessment, planning, implementation, performance measurement, evaluation, and long-term sustainability.

Application period: Open now through October 30, 2026

Maximum award: Applicants may request up to \$300,000 per application, whether the application is for one eligible RHC or includes multiple eligible RHCs under a health system or organization. For an organization-level application, the \$300,000 cap applies to the combined request for all participating clinics.

Grant period: Begins upon execution of the subgrant agreement and ends September 30, 2027. All awarded funds must be expended by September 30, 2027.

Eligible applicants: Certified Rural Health Clinics located in Michigan counties designated as fully rural or partially rural are eligible to apply. Priority will be given to applicants located in fully rural counties.

Where does this funding come from?

This funding originates from the federal **Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP)**. Michigan's RHTP award is administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

MCRH received funding through MDHHS to support Rural Health Clinics in strengthening data integration, digital infrastructure, interoperability, information exchange, connectivity, and administrative efficiency. MCRH will award funding to eligible Rural Health Clinics through the **Rural Data Integration and Infrastructure Fund** and provide participating clinics with technical assistance, implementation support, monitoring, and reporting guidance.

MCRH will serve as the primary point of contact for participating Rural Health Clinics throughout the application, award, implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes.

What support is included?

Selected clinics will receive funding on a reimbursement basis and individualized technical assistance throughout the project period. MCRH and its partners will support readiness assessment, project planning, implementation, workflow development, performance measurement, evaluation, peer learning, and long-term sustainability. Depending on the selected cohort and approved project, support may also include subject matter expertise related to health information exchange, community information exchange, interoperability, referral infrastructure, digital tools, and administrative workflow improvement.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

Certified Rural Health Clinics located in Michigan counties designated as fully rural or partially rural are eligible to apply. Priority will be given to applicants located in fully rural counties. Clinics should review the [MDHHS RHTP counties resource](#) to confirm eligibility. Clinics with questions about eligibility should contact MCRH before applying.

Can multiple clinics within the same health system apply?

Yes. For this funding opportunity, a health system or organization with multiple eligible RHCs must choose one of two application approaches:

- Submit one organization-level application that includes multiple eligible RHCs; or
- Have each participating RHC submit an individual clinic-level application.

Each participating RHC must be identified by name, location, and CMS Certification Number (CCN). An organization-level application must also explain how the proposed activities and requested funding will be allocated among the participating clinics.

These approaches are mutually exclusive for each clinic. An RHC included in an organization-level application may not also submit or be included in a separate application for the same funding opportunity.

Can clinics apply for other RHTP funding opportunities?

Clinics may apply for other RHTP funding opportunities for which they are eligible. Each opportunity has its own application, selection process, workplan, and budget requirements. Activities and expenses must be clearly separated across awards, and the same expense may not be charged to more than one funding source. Any limits on receiving multiple RHTP awards will be identified in the applicable funding opportunity materials.

Receiving or applying for other RHTP funding does not prevent your organization from applying for this opportunity. However, funds may not cover the same expenses already supported by another funding source.

Project Priority Areas

What will participating clinics be expected to address?

Participating clinics will implement activities aligned with their selected cohort. Clinics will not be expected to begin at the same starting point or implement identical activities. Each clinic's specific strategies, scope, and sequence will reflect its identified needs, existing infrastructure, organizational capacity, and community priorities.

Data Integration Cohort

The Data Integration Cohort will support clinics in strengthening health information exchange, community referral infrastructure, social care coordination, and related clinical and administrative workflows.

Depending on the clinic's needs and current infrastructure, activities may include:

- Health information exchange onboarding and implementation of priority use cases, including secure messaging, referral workflows, and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services application programming interface integration, when applicable
- Integration of HIE tools and processes into clinical and administrative workflows
- Community Information Exchange implementation and social determinants of health referral tracking
- Development or improvement of closed-loop referral workflows with Michigan Hubs, Family Resource Centers, Area Agencies on Aging, and other community partners
- Staff training on HIE, CIE, and community referral platforms
- Other approved data integration or information-sharing activities aligned with the purpose of the cohort

Innovative Tools Cohort

The Innovative Tools Cohort will support clinics in implementing technology solutions that improve administrative efficiency, documentation, revenue cycle performance, prior authorization processes, and other operational workflows.

Depending on the clinic's needs and current infrastructure, activities may include:

- Billing, coding, and documentation tools
- Revenue cycle optimization tools
- Prior authorization workflow improvements
- Automation of approved administrative processes
- Technology pilots and related workflow redesign
- Staff training and implementation support related to approved technology
- Other approved technology or administrative workflow improvements aligned with the purpose of the cohort

Activities Available to Both Cohorts

Projects in either cohort may also include activities that support electronic health record optimization, digital literacy, patient engagement, telehealth readiness, and access to digital health tools.

Activities may include:

- Onboarding new electronic health record software or optimizing existing systems
- Improving documentation and data collection processes that support quality reporting
- Conducting digital literacy assessments for patients or community members
- Providing approved digital literacy education or support

- Onboarding patients and staff to telehealth, remote patient monitoring, or other approved digital health platforms
- Integrating approved tools into clinical or administrative workflows

All proposed activities must be directly connected to the clinic's selected cohort and included in the approved workplan and budget.

Funding and Allowable Costs

How much funding is available?

Applicants may request up to \$300,000 per application, whether the application is for one eligible RHC or includes multiple eligible RHCs under a health system or organization. For an organization-level application, the \$300,000 cap applies to the combined request for all participating clinics.

Is a match required?

No. There is no matching requirement for this funding opportunity.

What expenses may be supported?

Funding may support reasonable and necessary expenses directly related to approved project activities and included in the clinic's approved budget. For more information, and a list of unallowable expenses, review the *Eligible and Ineligible Uses of Funds Guide*.

Will funding be provided upfront or through reimbursement?

Funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis rather than an upfront payment. Selected clinics will incur eligible, approved project expenses and submit the required documentation to MCRH for review and reimbursement. Reimbursement schedules, documentation requirements, and fiscal reporting instructions will be outlined in the subgrant agreement.

When can clinics begin spending?

Selected clinics may begin grant-funded activities and expenditures only after the required subgrant agreement is fully executed and the clinic's workplan and budget have been approved. Expenses incurred outside the approved project period or prior to authorization may not be eligible for reimbursement.

Can funding replace an existing source of support?

No. RHTP funding may not be used to replace existing funding, general funds, or currently funded positions. Funding may be used to develop new activities or meaningfully strengthen or expand existing efforts when the proposed grant-funded costs are new, additional, and directly related to the clinic's approved workplan.

Funds may not be used to pay for expenses that are currently funded, have already been paid, or will be reimbursed by another funding source. Applicants should clearly describe how the requested funding will add to or enhance existing work rather than replace current support.

Application Process

Will there be an informational webinar?

An informational webinar is scheduled for **October 9, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time**. A recording will be made available after the webinar.

How do clinics apply?

Eligible clinics must complete and submit the Rural Data Integration and Infrastructure Fund Application by **October 30, 2026**.

The application asks clinics to describe their selected cohort, current needs and capabilities, proposed activities, anticipated results, readiness to implement, sustainability plans, and funding request.

How will applications be evaluated?

Funding is competitive and will not be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications will first be reviewed for eligibility and completeness.

Eligible applications will then be scored on a 10-point scale using the five criteria below. Each criterion will receive 0, 1, or 2 points.

1. **Clinic need and anticipated benefit:** The data exchange, digital infrastructure, technology, or administrative challenges identified and the anticipated benefit to participating clinics, patients, staff, or communities.
2. **Alignment with the selected cohort:** How well the proposed activities align with the purpose and priorities of the Data Integration Cohort or Innovative Tools Cohort.
3. **Feasibility and readiness:** The clinic's current capacity, proposed approach, project leadership, technical readiness, and ability to implement the project within the funding period.
4. **Partnerships, anticipated results, and sustainability:** The proposed involvement of internal and external partners, expected improvements, ability to measure progress, and initial approach to sustaining the technology, workflows, or infrastructure beyond the funding period.
5. **Budget:** Whether the requested funding is reasonable, connected to the proposed activities, consistent with eligible uses of funds, and likely to be fully expended by September 30, 2027.

A score of 0 means the criterion is not addressed, 1 means it is partially addressed, and 2 means it is clearly addressed.

In addition to the application score, MCRH may consider rurality, geographic distribution, available state and federal data, and applicable needs-based priorities identified by MDHHS when making final funding decisions.

Priority will be given to clinics located in fully rural counties. Applicants may provide local context when it helps explain needs that are not fully reflected in available data.

What happens after a clinic is selected?

Selected clinics will:

- Complete contracting and onboarding requirements.
- Complete a readiness assessment to confirm cohort fit and guide implementation planning.
- Establish or confirm baseline measures and finalize a site-specific workplan, budget, implementation approach, and performance measures.

Participating Clinic Expectations

What will participating clinics be expected to do?

Participating clinics will be expected to:

- Identify a project lead and appropriate implementation team.
- Implement approved activities aligned with the selected Data Integration Cohort or Innovative Tools Cohort.

- Participate in required technical assistance and shared learning, including sharing implementation experiences and lessons learned.
- Track agreed-upon performance measures, maintain documentation supporting project activities and expenditures, and submit required performance and fiscal reports.
- Communicate implementation challenges, requested changes, and technical assistance needs to MCRH.
- Plan for the long-term sustainability of successful technology, infrastructure, and workflow improvements.
- Expend funds awarded for this funding period by **September 30, 2027**, in accordance with the approved workplan, budget, and subgrant agreement.

MCRH will work with each clinic to develop a site-specific workplan based on its identified needs, priorities, existing infrastructure, and capacity. Clinics will report on required performance measures established for the fund, with additional measures developed as appropriate to reflect clinic-specific activities. Final performance measures will align with applicable MDHHS and RHTP evaluation requirements.

Technical Assistance and Implementation Support

What support will MCRH provide?

MCRH will provide and coordinate individualized technical assistance, shared learning opportunities, tools and resources, access to subject matter expertise, and implementation support throughout the project period. Depending on the clinic's selected cohort, approved workplan, and identified needs, technical assistance may include:

- Readiness assessment, baseline measures, workplan development, and evaluation.
- EHR optimization, HIE and CIE implementation, and integration of technology into clinic workflows.
- Community partnerships, referral platform training, and closed-loop referral processes, including social needs referral tracking.
- Billing, coding, documentation, revenue cycle, prior authorization, automation, and other approved administrative tools.
- Digital literacy support and implementation of telehealth, remote care monitoring, and other approved digital health platforms.
- Staff training, workflow redesign, implementation problem-solving, and sustainability planning.

Will clinics participate in shared learning?

Yes. As part of MCRH's implementation approach, participating clinics will be expected to engage in learning collaboratives, webinars, peer discussions, and other shared learning opportunities throughout the project period. These opportunities will allow clinics to share tools, strategies, implementation challenges, and lessons learned. MCRH will also use clinic feedback and experiences to help shape resources, technical assistance, and future learning opportunities.

Performance Measurement and Reporting

Participating clinics will track standardized and project-specific implementation and performance measures aligned with the selected cohort and the clinic's approved workplan. Depending on the clinic's project, measures may include:

- HIE and CIE onboarding and implementation milestones completed
- New or strengthened interfaces, connections, or data exchange capabilities
- Secure messaging and information-sharing workflows implemented
- Referral and closed-loop follow-up processes implemented or strengthened

- Referrals initiated, received, and completed
- Approved technology integrated into clinical or administrative workflows
- Community or healthcare partnerships established or strengthened
- Staff trained to use new technology, tools, or workflows
- Digital literacy assessments completed and individuals receiving related support
- Individuals onboarded to telehealth, remote care monitoring, or other approved digital health platforms
- Improvements in billing, coding, documentation, prior authorization, revenue cycle, or other administrative processes
- Other measures related to the clinic's approved project activities

Final performance measures will be established with MCRH during development of the clinic's site-specific workplan and will align with applicable MDHHS and RHTP evaluation requirements. MCRH will provide reporting tools and technical assistance to support data collection and performance measurement.

How frequently will clinics report?

Participating clinics should anticipate quarterly performance reporting, along with regular implementation and performance check-ins. MCRH will provide reporting requirements, templates, timelines, and technical assistance. Fiscal reporting requirements will be outlined in the clinic's subgrant agreement.

Can approved activities or budgets be changed?

Clinics must contact MCRH before making changes to approved project activities, workplans, or budgets. Changes must be reviewed and approved by MCRH in accordance with the clinic's subgrant agreement and applicable MDHHS requirements before revised activities or expenditures are implemented.

Additional RHTP Funding Opportunities

MCRH is offering additional Rural Health Transformation Program funding opportunities for Rural Health Clinics. Each opportunity has its own eligibility requirements, application materials, selection process, workplan, budget, and agreement requirements.

Clinics may apply for multiple opportunities for which they are eligible. Activities and expenses must be clearly separated across applications and awards, and the same expense may not be charged to more than one funding source. Any limitations on receiving multiple RHTP awards will be identified in the applicable funding materials. Receiving or applying for other RHTP funding does not prevent your organization from applying for this opportunity. However, funds may not cover the same expenses already supported by another funding source.

Questions and Contact Information

For questions about eligibility, the application, proposed activities, budgets, or technical assistance, contact:

Michigan Center for Rural Health RHTP Team

Email: RHTP.MCRH@msu.edu

Program webpage: <https://mcrh.msu.edu/programs/primary-care/rhc-rhtp26applications>

Dates and funding levels are subject to final MDHHS approval. Funding priorities were determined by MDHHS.

This publication/activity is supported by the Rural Health Transformation Program administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services through a federal award from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$9,620,000 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of MDHHS, CMS, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Completed applications and all supporting documents **must** be submitted by email to RHTP.MCRH@msu.edu before **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on October 30, 2026**.