

Application and Interview Process Guide

Rural Healthcare Provider Transition Project (RHPTP)

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RHPTP Purpose and Goal

With the support of the Health Resources Services Administration's [Federal Office of Rural Health Policy \(FORHP\)](#), the [National Rural Health Resource Center](#) provides selected small rural hospitals (SRH) and certified rural health clinics (RHCs) with technical assistance (TA) through the [Rural Healthcare Provider Transition Project \(RHPTP\)](#). This project is designed to strengthen recipients' foundation in the key elements of value-based care (VBC), including, but not limited to quality, efficiency, patient experience, and safety. RHPTP's goal is to guide SRH and RHCs not currently participating in VBC, in preparing for and positioning their organizations for future participation in value-based care. Five applicants will be chosen each year to receive virtual and onsite TA.

Ideal Applicants

Ideal SRH or RHC applicants are those that demonstrate need and readiness for comprehensive TA, a level of financial stability, and a strong, stable leadership committed to active engagement in all phases of the project. While all eligible SRH and RHCs are encouraged to apply, this project will best support candidates that do not have readily available support and access to VBC transition tools and resources.

Project Timeline

Year One						
June 10, 2026	August 14, 2026	End of September 2026	Early October 2026	October 15, 2026	Late October 2026	August 31, 2027
Informational Webinar at 1 p.m. Central Time	Applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. Central Time	90-minute interview calls completed	Selected organizations are notified	Kick-off webinar held for new cohort at 12 p.m. Central Time	Project TA begins	Project TA ends

Year Two			
September 2027 – January 2028	February – March 2028	April – July 2028	August – September 2028
HCO executes action plan	Recommendation Adoption Progress (RAP) Call #1	HCO continues implementation, monitoring and evaluation of action plan and progress HCO completes Post-Measurable Outcomes document to provide progress updates	Recommendation Adoption Progress (RAP) Call #2

Application

Applications are accepted electronically on a rolling basis; however, a deadline is assigned for each upcoming project year. Once the deadline for an upcoming project year has passed, typically in August, organizations may begin applying for the next project year. Upon submission of the application, you will be contacted to schedule an interview with the RHPTP team.

Interview and Scoring

Each application is followed by a 90-minute virtual interview to inform the selection process. Interview scoring is completed across three primary areas of focus:

1. **Project readiness** to assess the organization's financial stability, organizational strengths and readiness, strategic alignment with RHPTP, leadership and organizational structure, and ability to manage competing priorities.
2. **Project need** to assess the organization's current capacity and need for technical assistance related to strategic planning, quality improvement, population health and chronic disease management, and financial and operational preparation for value-based payment and care delivery models.
3. **Project commitment** to assess the organization's ownership and capacity, communication and responsiveness, participation and engagement, and post-project follow-through.

Final applicant selection decisions are based on responses to the interview questions in Appendix A and may also include additional factors to ensure all applicant types (hospital only, RHC only, hospital-RHC combo, RHC consortium) are represented across cohorts.

See [Appendix A](#) for interview questions, and [Appendix B](#) for scoring guidance.

Selection Notification and Announcement

Selected organizations will be notified via phone call and a follow-up email, typically in September of each year. Technical assistance typically begins in October and runs through August.

Contact Information

For questions regarding eligibility, application, or scoring process, please contact Angie LaFlamme at alaflamme@ruralcenter.org, 218-216-7022, or email rhptp@ruralcenter.org.

Appendix A

RHPTP Interview Questions

To determine **READINESS** for focused technical assistance in building a foundation for VBC:

1. What variables (measurable and unmeasurable) did you consider in determining your organization's financial stability to participate in this project? Include variables, sources for benchmarking, rationale and measures.
 - Also, please specify your organization's most recent:
 - Operating margin (%)
 - Days cash on hand
2. Describe your organization's strengths that will assist you in participating in this project and implementing recommendations to move towards future payment and delivery models.
3. How does RHPTP support your organization's current strategic initiatives? What factors make your organization ready to commit to this project currently?
4. Describe your leadership, finance, and quality improvement structure. Who are the key individuals from these areas who would support this project?
5. Are there any current or anticipated organizational changes, competing priorities, staffing challenges, leadership transitions, or major initiatives that could impact your organization's ability to fully participate in RHPTP over the next two years?
 - If yes, please describe how your organization plans to manage these competing priorities while maintaining active participation in the project.

To determine **NEED** for focused technical assistance in building a foundation for VBC:

6. Does your organization have a current strategic plan?
 - If yes, describe your planning process, the dashboard you use (for example, Balanced Scorecard or other model) to monitor progress on your organization's strategic goals and objectives, and how this information is shared within your organization.
7. Describe in detail your quality improvement program. Include information about who is involved, how data is collected, tracked, and used to make changes, and examples of quality improvement issues that have been addressed.

8. Describe current activities to address population health and chronic disease management. Include any initiatives within your organization that address the health of your employees. Examples include wellness and prevention, community collaboration, care management, education, information management/disease registry, addressing social determinants of health, and collaboration with primary care physicians.
9. Describe current activities to address population health and chronic disease management. Include any initiatives within your organization that address the health of your employees. Examples include wellness and prevention, community collaboration, care management, education, information management/disease registry, addressing social determinants of health, and collaboration with primary care physicians.
10. Describe your past and current financial and operational activities to prepare for the transition to a value-based payment system.
11. Describe the ways you currently utilize telehealth services to prepare for VBC, as well as any plans for utilization.

To determine COMMITMENT for focused technical assistance in building a foundation for VBC:

12. Who will serve as the primary project leads for this initiative? Please describe their roles, available capacity, and decision-making authority.
13. Describe your organization's process for managing and responding to project communications (e.g., emails, meeting invitations, requests for information, deliverables, and deadlines). Who will be responsible for monitoring project communications, and how will your organization ensure timely responses and continuity if the primary contact is unavailable?
14. Do you anticipate any technological limitations that could impact your ability to fully participate in the project (e.g., reliable internet, Zoom capability, access to computers for participating staff, ability to receive Outlook calendar invitations)?
 - If so, how will you address them?
15. Has your organization ever participated in a long-term initiative (approximately one year or longer)?
 - If yes, what factors contributed to your organization's ability to remain engaged and successfully complete the initiative? What made participation challenging, if anything? What lessons did you learn that you would apply to this project?

- If not, what strategies, resources, or organizational practices would you put in place to ensure your organization remains engaged, and maintains momentum and accountability throughout the two-year project (e.g., leadership check-ins, internal project meetings, assigned responsibilities, tracking milestones, back-up staff, communication plans)?
16. This project includes 6- and 12-month follow-up calls during year-2 of the project. These calls are essential to project evaluation and help us understand progress, outcomes, sustainability and longer-term impact of the technical assistance provided. How will your organization ensure continued engagement and participation in these follow-up calls after the primary project activities have concluded?
17. Has your organization ever participated in an accountable care organization (ACO)?
18. Is your organization currently participating in an ACO?
- If yes, what is the name of the ACO, and what motivated you to apply for RHPTP?
 - If not, please share why you are not currently, or have not previously participated.
19. How many fee-for-service Medicare beneficiaries do you estimate could be attributed to your organization under an ACO model?
20. Given everything that we have discussed, what concerns (if any) do you have about committing to the full scope of this project?

Appendix B

Interview Scoring

Question		Scoring Guidelines
Project Readiness		
Question #1	What variables (measurable and unmeasurable) did you consider in determining your organization's financial stability to participate in this project? Include variables, sources for benchmarking, rationale and measures. Also, please specify your organization's most recent: • Operating margin (%) • Days cash on hand	1 = Not at all positioned for future participation 2 = Slightly positioned for future participation 3 = Moderately positioned for future participation 4 = Strongly positioned for future participation

Question		Scoring Guidelines
Question #2	Describe your organization's strengths that will assist you in participating in this project and implementing recommendations to move towards future payment and delivery models.	1 = Not at all positioned for future participation 2 = Slightly positioned for future participation 3 = Moderately positioned for future participation 4 = Strongly positioned for future participation
Question #3	How does RHPTP support your organization's current strategic initiatives? What factors make your organization ready to commit to this project currently?	1 = Low (no clear plan) 2 = Developing (limited alignment) 3 = Proficient (good alignment) 4 = High (strong strategic alignment)
Question #4	Describe your leadership, finance, and quality improvement structure. Who are the key individuals from these areas who would support this project?	1 = Low (limited structure and support) 2 = Developing (emerging capacity) 3 = Proficient (adequate capacity and support) 4 = High (strong capacity and engagement)
Question #5	Are there any current or anticipated organizational changes, competing priorities, staffing challenges, leadership transitions, or major initiatives that could impact your organization's ability to fully participate in RHPTP over the next two years? If yes, please describe how your organization plans to manage these competing priorities while maintaining active participation in the project.	1 = Low (high risk) 2 = Developing (moderate risk) 3 = Proficient (manageable risk) 4 = High (low risk/proactive planning)
Project Need		
Question #6	Does your organization have a current strategic plan?	1 = Not at all positioned for future participation

Question		Scoring Guidelines
	If yes, describe your planning process, the dashboard you use (for example, Balanced Scorecard or other model) to monitor progress on your organization's strategic goals and objectives, and how this information is shared within your organization.	2 = Slightly positioned for future participation 3 = Moderately positioned for future participation 4 = Strongly positioned for future participation
Question #7	Describe in detail your quality improvement program. Include information about who is involved, how data is collected, tracked, and used to make changes, and examples of quality improvement issues that have been addressed.	1 = Not at all positioned for future participation 2 = Slightly positioned for future participation 3 = Moderately positioned for future participation 4 = Strongly positioned for future participation
Question #8	Describe current activities to address population health and chronic disease management. Include any initiatives within your organization that address the health of your employees. Examples include wellness and prevention, community collaboration, care management, education, information management/disease registry, addressing social determinants of health, collaboration with primary care physicians.	1 = Not at all positioned for future participation 2 = Slightly positioned for future participation 3 = Moderately positioned for future participation 4 = Strongly positioned for future participation
Question #9	Describe your past and current financial and operational activities to prepare for the transition to a value-based payment system.	1 = Not at all positioned for future participation 2 = Slightly positioned for future participation 3 = Moderately positioned for future participation

Question		Scoring Guidelines
		4 = Strongly positioned for future participation
Question #10	Describe the ways you currently utilize telehealth services. Include any information about disease specific areas, use of remote patient monitoring systems, extent in which you utilize telehealth, and any future telehealth plans.	1 = Not at all positioned for future participation 2 = Slightly positioned for future participation 3 = Moderately positioned for future participation 4 = Strongly positioned for future participation
Project Commitment		
Question #11	Who will serve as the primary project leads for this initiative? Please describe their roles, available capacity, and decision-making authority.	1 = Low (no clear lead) 2 = Developing (named leads, unclear capacity) 3 = Moderate (defined leads with adequate capacity) 4 = High (strong ownership and capacity)
Question #12	Describe your organization's process for managing and responding to project communications (e.g., emails, meeting invitations, requests for information, deliverables, and deadlines). Who will be responsible for monitoring project communications, and how will your organization ensure timely responses and continuity if the primary contact is unavailable?	1 = Low (slow/inconsistent) 2 = Developing (basic) 3 = Proficient (reliable) 4 = High (proactive)
Question #13	Do you anticipate any technological limitations that could impact your ability to fully participate in the project (e.g., reliable internet, Zoom capability, access to computers for participating staff, ability	1 = Low (high risk) 2 = Developing (moderate risk) 3 = Proficient (manageable risk)

Question		Scoring Guidelines
	to receive Outlook calendar invitations)? If so, how will you address them?	4 = High (proactive and well-prepared)
Question #14	Has your organization ever participated in a long-term initiative (approximately one year or longer)? If yes, what factors contributed to your organization's ability to remain engaged and successfully complete the initiative? What made participation challenging, if anything? What lessons did you learn that you would apply to this project? If not, what strategies, resources, or organizational practices would you put in place to ensure your organization remains engaged, and maintains momentum and accountability throughout the two-year project (e.g., leadership check-ins, internal project meetings, assigned responsibilities, tracking milestones, back-up staff, communication plans)?	1 = Minimum commitment/planning 2 = Limited commitment/planning 3 = Moderate commitment 4 = Strong commitment and engagement
Question #15	This project includes 6- and 12-month follow-up calls during year-2 of the project. How does your organization typically handle follow-up reporting or re-engagement after initiatives end?	1 = Low (limited commitment) 2 = Low-moderate (limited commitment) 3 = Moderate (established commitment) 4 = High (strong accountability)
Question #16	Has your organization ever participated in an accountable care organization (ACO)? Is your organization currently participating in an ACO? If yes, what is the name of the ACO, and what motivated you to apply for RHPTP? If no, please share why you are not currently, or have not previously participated.	This question is not scored.

Question		Scoring Guidelines
Question #17	How many fee-for-service Medicare beneficiaries do you estimate could be attributed to your organization under an ACO model?	This question is not scored.
Question #18	Given everything that we have discussed, what concerns (if any) do you have about committing to the full scope of this project?	This question is not scored.
Total Score: _____		