



North Dakota Health and Human Services | Rural Health Transformation Program

Competitive Funding Opportunity Application Guidance

Funding Opportunity Name: Hospital-Based Wellness Equipment

Funding Opportunity Solicitation Number: 210-122

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Funding Overview:

1) Background

As part of Public Law 119-21, Congress established the \$50 billion [Rural Health Transformation Program \(RHTP\)](#) to help rural communities reimagine their health care delivery systems and improve health outcomes. This program, administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), aims to address longstanding healthcare challenges facing rural communities, which may include rural tribal communities.

North Dakota is taking bold, practical steps to restore health, stability and prosperity to America's heartland. North Dakota Health and Human Services (ND HHS) developed its RHTP to focus on creating new access points, modernizing care delivery and empowering local providers to meet the needs of their communities through sustainable investments. North Dakota's plan, as indicated in the [RHTP application and supporting documents](#), includes four initiatives:

- Initiative 1: Make North Dakota Healthy Again
- Initiative 2: Strengthen and Stabilize Rural Health Workforce
- Initiative 3: Bring High-Quality Health Care Closer to Home
- Initiative 4: Connect Tech, Data and Providers for a Stronger North Dakota

Following approval from CMS, ND HHS is launching multiple funding opportunities as part of North Dakota's five-year RHTP effort. These opportunities are designed to support practical, locally driven solutions that help rural communities, including rural tribal communities, stay healthy and strong. Funding opportunities will be released in phases, with individual applications announced over time. Eligible applicants may apply for more than one funding opportunity; there is no limit to the number of applications that can be submitted.

2) Funding Opportunity Description

The Hospital-Based Wellness Equipment funding opportunity supports leaders of North Dakota's rural hospitals, which are defined for this funding opportunity as a critical access hospital. This includes non-federally operated Indian Health Service facilities and tribally run 638 health facilities. This excludes clinics, health centers, behavioral health or psychiatric hospitals and per CMS requirements, federally operated Indian Health Service hospitals. For RHTP funding opportunities, the entities within and the cities of Grand Forks, Fargo, West Fargo and Bismarck are considered urban.

North Dakota's rural healthcare facilities are unique in their work-related challenges, not only because they directly impact lives, but also because of the high-stress and

technically complex environment that rural healthcare workers, such as nurses, doctors, technicians and support staff, must navigate daily. While rural hospitals and healthcare institutions are primarily focused on patient care, they often overlook a critical factor that contributes significantly to the quality of that care: the well-being of their workforce. North Dakota's rural hospital workers often face shift work, long hours, emotional strain and physical exhaustion, which can lead to burnout, stress-related health problems, diminished job performance and turnover. Providing employees of North Dakota's rural hospitals with health and wellness opportunities can be a game-changer—leading to healthier, happier employees who provide better care for patients.

Through this opportunity, significant improvements in the health and well-being of North Dakota's rural healthcare workforce can be made, not least of which are:

- Reducing burnout: Burnout in healthcare workers can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced empathy and a sense of detachment from the job. By offering employees access to equipment designed to promote better health, emotional resilience and effective stress management, the incidence of burnout can be significantly reduced.
- Improving physical health: Long or rotating shifts, irregular hours and the physically demanding nature of their jobs can lead to health problems like back pain, sleep disorders, cardiovascular issues, poor nutrition, metabolic issues and fatigue. Encouraging consistent physical fitness, proper ergonomics, mindfulness, social connection and healthy eating habits can help mitigate these risks.
- Boosting morale and job satisfaction: A healthy and engaged workforce is more productive, more satisfied and less likely to leave their jobs. Having the right wellness equipment can help to foster a more supportive work environment which can enhance morale and reduce staff turnover.
- Enhancing patient care: When healthcare workers are healthy and energized, they are more attentive and compassionate, usually leading to better patient care. The mental and physical well-being of staff has been shown to be directly linked to patient safety, better care outcomes and greater job satisfaction.

Specifically, the following list of fitness and wellness equipment represents a wide array of examples that align with this CAH and employee wellness equipment funding opportunity.

Cardiovascular machines:

- Stationary bikes
- Treadmills
- Ellipticals

- Stair climbers

Back strengthening:

- Seated row machines
- Lat pulldown machines
- Low back extension machines
- Cable towers
- Multifunction strength stations

General strength and conditioning:

- Power racks
- Squat racks
- Adjustable benches
- Free weights and other resistance hardware
- Dumbbells and kettle bells
- Weight plates
- Resistance bands
- Wobble balls

Recovery tools:

- Foam rollers
- Stretching mats
- Massage balls
- Percussive guns
- Heat wraps
- Dynamic compression boots

Mental health and sensory spaces:

- Fidget items
- Weighted blankets
- Noise canceling headphones

Mindfulness, yoga and stress:

- Yoga mats
- Specialized pose activity pads
- ~~Zero-gravity and massage chairs~~

Functional movement equipment:

- Activity balls
- Jump ropes
- Floor mats
- Agility ladders
- Medicine balls
- BOSU balls

Brain Breaks:

- Portable "energizer" kits featuring movement dice
- Fleece balls
- Countdown timers

Physical Therapy:

- Resistance bands
- BOSU balls
- Wobble boards

Wearables:

- Step trackers
- Biofeedback technology
- Fatigue & recovery monitors
- Ergonomic sensors
- Heart rate monitors

With this equipment listing, science reveals that to be maximally effective, best-in-class wellness equipment acquisition initiatives must contain the following components to improve employee well-being and patient care delivery.

Success Component #1: Specific equipment identification

Being specific when requesting funding for your facility's new wellness equipment is essential because it will ensure that your item(s) meet operational needs, fit the funding budget and integrate perfectly into the everyday flow. In addition, equipment must be located within the facility.

Because of this, when completing the grant application, you will need to be as specific as possible with respect to equipment brand names, specifications, features, assembly, installation, etc.

Success Component #2: Specific costs

Knowing the specific cost of your equipment is also essential to ensure your request falls within budget guidelines. Remember, upfront prices rarely include delivery, installation, integration or operator training. Knowing these costs as you prepare your funding application can prevent delays and administrative headaches.

Success Component #3: Need justification

Finally, the third component associated with the successful purchase of hospital-based wellness equipment need justification.

As you can appreciate, a carefully thought out “needs justification” not only helps you to envision things like long-term gains you hope to achieve, but also prevents buying equipment with expensive, high-end extras that your hospital will not actually utilize.

To make this funding opportunity a reality, we are looking to partner with a bold group of believing difference makers—healthcare leaders who are driven by a burning desire to systematically enhance employee health, well-being and patient-care performance.

Energized by the shared vision of healthier, more productive staff members, we will work together to get you the wellness equipment you need to transform your hospital’s employee wellness environment.

Working together, we will learn, we will grow and we will succeed. But most importantly, through our combined efforts over the next few years, we will change the well-being of healthcare workers for decades to come.

Remember, all eligible funding submissions must include how the three components of success will be incorporated into their hospital’s overall equipment funding request.

Funding Opportunity Metrics

Additionally, this funding opportunity aims to support improvement in the metrics identified for Initiative 1: Make North Dakota Healthy Again, found on pages 19-26 of the [project narrative](#) and pages 11-15 of the project [appendices](#). Please note, not all metrics apply to the Make North Dakota Healthy Again funding opportunity. The metrics for this and related projects are:

- Increased individual participation in wellness activities
- Increased wellness screening
- Increased nutrition
- Increased physical activity
- Enhanced mental well-being
- Increased social connection
- Improvements in policies, systems and environments that help to make the healthy choice, the easy choice.

3) Eligibility

For RHTP funding opportunities, the entities within and the cities of Grand Forks, Fargo, West Fargo and Bismarck are considered urban and do not qualify for RHTP funding opportunities. Applicants must be a rural hospital, which are defined for this funding opportunity as a Critical Access Hospital. This includes non-federally operated Indian Health Service facilities and tribally run 638 health facilities. This excludes clinics, health centers, behavioral health or psychiatric hospitals and per CMS requirements, federally operated Indian Health Service hospitals.

4) Available Funds and Timeline

This is a competitive funding opportunity application process for Year 1 RHTP funding. An additional application process for Make North Dakota Healthy Again funding opportunity is expected to be offered in future years of the RHTP.

The operating period will start upon execution of the agreement, with all required approvals and signatures. The operating period will end on September 30, 2027, and all funds must be expended by this date. All goods purchased under this award must be fully delivered by the end of the operating period.

Approximately \$500,000 in total federal funds are available for this hospital-based wellness equipment funding opportunity. The awards provided will be dependent on the applications received; an estimated 10 awards for approximately \$50,000 are expected to be funded.

For this funding opportunity, one application per organization will be accepted. If an applicant has multiple equipment requests pertaining to this funding opportunity, each item should be numbered in order of priority.

Applications and strategies for hospital-based wellness equipment not funded in the initial awards may be considered later in the year pending a review of available funds.

ND HHS reserves the right to negotiate the applicant's budget based on the number of applications received, the content of the proposed project work plan and total budget of the Make North Dakota Healthy Again funding opportunity prior to issuing the award.

Refer to the [Budget section](#) for details on allowable and unallowable costs.

Additional funding opportunities will be available for other RHTP activities and initiatives. Eligible applicants may apply for more than one funding opportunity. There is no limit to the number of applications that can be submitted across all RHTP funding opportunities; however, for this funding opportunity, only one application per organization should be submitted.

5) Reporting Requirements

The successful applicant(s) will be required to submit reimbursement requests and/or supporting information, progress reports and impact stories to ND HHS. Templates will be provided for reporting requirements. Due dates and additional information will be provided in the agreement.

Successful applicants may be required to report for up to five years or as otherwise required by CMS.

Additional reporting requirements may be required based upon updated federal guidance.

6) Application Submission

Applications for this funding opportunity are due by July 30, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. CT. Applications must be submitted to ND HHS through [Qualtrics](#).

For this funding opportunity, one application per organization should be submitted. If an applicant has multiple strategies pertaining to this funding opportunity, these should be numbered in order of priority in the narrative and budget

Applications not received by the submission date and time will be considered non-responsive and not reviewed.

A complete application must include responses to all questions and a completed budget using the "Itemized Subrecipient Budget Template." Applicants are required to upload the completed budget template in Excel format to Qualtrics.

The application questions, along with full details, are provided in the Application Requirements section of this document. This section is meant to serve as a companion resource while completing the Qualtrics survey. Applicants are welcome to copy the questions into any format to draft their responses. However, final answers must be submitted through the Qualtrics survey.

7) Technical Assistance

A technical assistance conference call has been scheduled for the following date and time:

July 1, 2026, noon-12:45 p.m. CT

[Registration Link](#)

The technical assistance call will be recorded and posted on the RHTP webpage for later viewing. Additional resources related to this funding announcement, including

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), will also be published on the RHTP webpage after the call.

We strongly encourage applicants to submit questions for this funding opportunity to [RHTP FAQ Survey](#) prior to 7 days of the submission deadline. As time allows, questions submitted prior to the technical assistance call will be addressed during the session and added to a FAQ resource. Questions submitted following the call will be answered and added to the published FAQ resource on the webpage. Questions submitted within 7 days of the submission deadline may not be addressed due to the volume of questions and staff members working on other RHTP funding opportunities.

Questions and application support requests may be directed to the [Regional Development Councils \(RDCs\)](#).

Application Requirements

Interested entities are required to submit an application to be considered for the Make North Dakota Healthy Again funding opportunity. Do not include any proprietary or confidential information in application materials as the application will become an open record.

Below is the outline and related details for the application. ND HHS has provided an “Itemized Subrecipient Budget Template.” All application components will be submitted through [Qualtrics](#).

- 1.) Background Information
- 2.) Project Narrative
 - a. Identified Need and Proposed Goals
 - b. Strategies, Activities, and Measurable Outcomes
 - c. Sustainability
- 3.) Action Plan (Milestones & Timelines)
- 4.) Budget

The application questions, along with full details, are provided in this document, which is meant to serve as a companion resource while completing the Qualtrics survey. Applicants are welcome to copy the questions from the Application Requirements Section into any format to draft their responses. However, final answers and a completed Itemized Subrecipient Budget Template must be submitted through the Qualtrics survey.

1) Background Information

Provide the following organizational information:

- Organization Name and Background – Provide the organization name, location and estimated population served.
- Project Lead and Contact Information – Identify the project lead who will serve as the primary point of contact to receive communications about your application. Provide first and last name, title, phone number and email.
- Project Title and Reason – State the project name and a brief description of why your organization is applying.

2) Project Narrative

The project narrative must address the identified need and planned strategies. Be as specific and concise as possible. Keep the narrative clear and focused on how it will make a difference for rural health, which may also include rural tribal health.

As a friendly reminder, for this funding opportunity, one application per organization should be submitted. If an applicant has multiple strategies pertaining to this funding opportunity, they should be numbered in order of priority in the narrative and budget.

a) Identified Need

Identify the need for the proposed project. When available, include relevant local data to demonstrate the scope and urgency of the need.

a.1. Identify the need for the proposed project. Discuss the challenges the proposed project aims to address. Describe the specific equipment issues impacting the facility and/or the staff. Additionally, please respond to the following questions:

- What specific well-being, social connection, or safety problems does the new equipment address? What data do you have that supports your request?
- What similar equipment is currently in place and what are its limitations (examples include age, downtime, and insufficient capability)?

a.2. RHTP funds cannot be used to duplicate or replace existing funding (supplanting). Funds can be used to expand or enhance an existing project (see Budget section for details). Is this project already in progress, currently funded by another source or actively being implemented in the organization or community? If yes:

- Identify current or similar projects and their funding sources.
- Explain why expansion or enhancement is needed. Describe how the proposed project will enhance rather than duplicate existing efforts, including how the organization plans to coordinate with partners to prevent duplication.

b) Strategies, Activities and Measurable Outcomes

The applicant must provide detailed information about the proposed project, including the outcomes, strategy, service and tasks. Each outcome, strategy, service and task

must include sufficient detail to ensure the scope is aligned with the eligible projects and requirements identified in this guidance. When applicable, strategies, services and tasks should be evidence-based, evidence-informed or a promising practice.

For each piece of equipment requested, please identify the strategic purposes, value and anticipated return on investment, use the following definitions:

- **Outcomes:** Outcomes should describe what will be different because of the project. Outcomes should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) and directly linked to the equipment requested. Consider what measurable improvements are expected (decrease in classroom disruptions, increase in opportunities for physical activity).
- **Strategy:** Strategies explain how the applicant intends to create the desired change. They are the high-level approaches or methods the project will use to achieve the outcomes. When applicable, provide information justifying how the equipment is evidence-based, evidence-informed or promising practice.
- **Services:** Services describe what is being offered or provided to accomplish the strategy and outcomes.
- **Tasks:** Tasks are the specific activities and actions to carry out the strategies and deliver on an outcome. Tasks break down strategies into action steps.

*Applicants must propose outcomes, strategies, services and tasks that align with the RHTP evaluation plan and metrics. The Initiative 1: Making North Dakota Healthy Again evaluation plan and metrics are identified in the funding opportunity description section of this guidance. Projects should support some or all the identified metrics.

With the overall goal of improving the health and well-being of your staff through the purchase of health and well-being equipment, please address the following questions.

b.1. Describe the specific equipment (including manufacturer/brand, features, cost, model numbers, delivery and installation costs, etc.). If there are multiple equipment purchase requests, please number them in order of priority (1 being the most important, 2 next important, etc.).

For each piece of equipment requested, please identify the strategic purpose and well-being outcomes that are anticipated.

Outcomes should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) and directly linked to the equipment requested (examples include increased physical fitness, stronger social connection, healthier eating, improved academic performance, etc.).

(*Applicants must propose strategies, activities, and measurable outcomes that recognize and align with the RHTP evaluation plan and metrics for the Make

North Dakota Healthy Again Initiative, identified on pages 52-53 of the project narrative, and pages 10-11 of the appendices.)

Specifically, these improvements and outcomes include recognizing success in the following areas:

- Increases in individual participation in wellness activities
- Increases in physical activity
- Increases in nutrition
- Enhanced mental well-being
- Improvements in policies, systems, and environments that help to make the healthy choice, the easy choice.

b.2. The applicant must sustain successful projects after funding ends. Explain how the identified strategy will be sustained and address how effective practices will be integrated into ongoing operations. Applicants may consider the following questions when assessing sustainability:

- Does the proposed strategy generate revenue?
- Does the projected need or utilization of a service generate revenue to cover the cost of the staff once the service is fully established?
- Does the proposed strategy help create savings in other healthcare costs that could be used to make up gaps in revenue?
- Is there a business plan?
- Is there a fundraising strategy?

Being as concise as possible, complete a comprehensive timeline for each identified strategy. The timeline must identify key milestones and dates to detail how the applicant will carry out the proposed outcomes, strategy, services and tasks. Please include an estimated completion date for the strategy.

As a reminder, the operating period will start upon execution of the agreement, with all required approvals and signatures. The operating period will end on September 30, 2027, and all funds must be expended by this date.

3) Action Plan

a. Milestones and Timelines:

Milestone #1: Specific Equipment Identification

- What specific equipment are you requesting (Be sure to include manufacturer/brand, model numbers, equipment features, installation and modest renovation requirements, etc.)? Where will this equipment be located (equipment must be located within your facility)?

Milestone #2: Ordering

- By what date will this equipment be ordered?

Milestone #3: Arrival

- By what date do you anticipate the equipment will arrive at your facility?

Milestone #4: Installation

- By what date do you anticipate the equipment will be installed and ready for use?
- Where will this equipment be located?
- How many staff will be potentially impacted by this equipment?

b. Metrics:

What are the specific metrics that you will use to determine this equipment's impact and success? How will these metrics be collected? How will they be communicated?

Note: If your project is selected for funding, templates will be provided for reporting requirements. Due dates and additional information will be provided in the agreement.

c. Key Personnel:

Please identify key personnel, including your project lead, who will take responsibility for seeing this project through to completion. Describe the type of work each person will perform in carrying out the project. Include their relevant credentials. If the applicant plans to use external sources, such as consultants, this must be explained in the project narrative and budget.

4.) Budget Submission and Details

Using the ND HHS provided “Itemized Subrecipient Budget Template”, develop and submit an itemized budget with appropriate justification for each cost category. The template can be found in the required documents section of the [funding opportunity webpage](#).

- Please upload a completed budget in Excel format, using the “Itemized Subrecipient Budget Template.”
- Each budget item must include detailed justification. Justifications must be clear and should include information on how the applicant determined the cost. For example, identify what information was used to determine salary or fringe benefit rates.
- If there are multiple strategies, please make a copy of the “budget” tab within the “Itemized Subrecipient Budget Template” for each. Clearly name the tabs with the corresponding priority numbers from the project narrative. Complete a separate budget tab for each strategy. For example, if the application narrative indicates there are three strategies, there should be three budget tabs.

Applicants are encouraged to submit vendor sales quote(s) for the proposed equipment to support cost accuracy; however, quote(s) are not required for the application to be considered complete.

RHTP funds are governed by applicable provisions of [2 CFR Part 200](#) and [2 CFR Part 300](#), with guidance from the federal RHTP [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) and CMS’s [Frequently Asked Questions documents](#) (found under “Helpful Resources”). The limits and unallowable costs detailed in this section come from federal guidance and are non-negotiable.

Details on Unallowable and Limited Costs

- RHTP funding is designed to support expansion and scale to better serve rural communities, not to replace or duplicate existing funding sources. When using funds to expand an existing pilot program or initiative or to develop a new training program with existing partners, the funds may only be applied to the costs associated with the new population, new activities, new program milestones or expansion.
- Pre-award costs.
- Meeting match requirements for any other federal funds or for local entities.
- Services, equipment or supports that are the legal responsibility of another party under federal, state, tribal or civil rights law.

- Supplanting existing state, local, tribal or private funding of infrastructure or services (ex. staff salaries).
- The cost of independent research and development.
- Funding toward projects similar to the “Rural Tech Catalyst Fund Initiative” cannot exceed the lesser of 10 percent of total funding or \$20 million of total funding awarded in a budget period.*
- Demolition of aged buildings.
- Building renovations.

*Limits apply to ND HHS’s spending of RHTP funds. Individual agreements may be considered for costs exceeding the budget limitations.

5) Application Review and Selection

Applications will be reviewed and scored solely on what is presented within the application materials. The committee will score applications based on criteria in the Scoring Tool found in the required documents section of the [funding opportunity webpage](#).

ND HHS aims to notify applicants about their award in a timely manner. ND HHS reserves the right to support applicants with changes to their project proposals to ensure ND HHS’s RHTP commitments are upheld; additionally, ND HHS may require applicants to supplement responses. ND HHS is in a cooperative agreement with CMS for RHTP and is subject to substantial CMS project involvement. This may delay funding timelines.

The awarded applicant(s) will be sent an agreement to sign and return to ND HHS. The awarded applicants shall comply with the agreement provisions set out in the sample documents. Due to the limited timeframe associated with the funding source for this funding opportunity, ND HHS will not entertain any changes to the agreement Terms and Conditions.

Additional Information

Information may change based on updated federal guidance or upon further consideration by ND HHS.

Learn More: [Rural Health Transformation | Health and Human Services North Dakota](#)

If you have feedback on the application process, please complete the [Funding Opportunity Feedback Survey](#).

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