

Oz: All 50 States Apply For Rural Health Fund As Applications Close

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As applications close at midnight Wednesday (Nov. 5) for the GOP megabill's rural health fund, CMS Administrator Mehmet Oz says all 50 states plan to apply -- and one state is touting its proposals to improve nutrition, strengthen the rural workforce and use telehealth to promote coordination of health care within rural communities.

The Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) was created in the GOP reconciliation bill passed and signed into law in July. As they passed the bill, many lawmakers said they created the fund to offset some of the spending cuts to Medicaid included in the megabill, but the Trump administration over the past few months has touted the fund as an investment in rural health. The \$50 billion will be split into two types of funding, but despite the lengthy notice of funding opportunity guidance, advocates like the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) are concerned about urban hospitals reclassified as rural getting access to RHTP funding.

Despite the government shutdown, CMS has maintained the Nov. 5 application deadline for the RHTP.

Speaking at the Fall 2025 America's Physician Groups (APG) conference in National Harbor, Maryland Wednesday (Nov. 5), Oz said all states have alerted CMS with their intent to apply for the five-year funding program known as the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP).

"Every state has alerted us that they're applying, as they should," Oz said. "They're all going to get \$200 million a year for the next five years, and our hope would be that they will be able to, with their application, promise to do certain things that will directly impact you."

Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders touted her states application to the RHTP in a recent release, saying the funding "will not only help us increase access to care but will also reduce inefficiencies throughout the healthcare system, ultimately benefitting Arkansans in smaller communities across the state."

Arkansas' application focuses on four initiatives that it says will use the rural health funds the state receives to "leverage the latest developments in healthcare technology, including patient centered AI, and integrate evidence-based prevention programs, data collection, and analytics to document return on investment and drive continuous improvement in rural healthcare."

The Healthy Eating, Active Recreation, and Transformation initiative will focus on implementing a coordinated, community-driven approach to nutrition, physical activity and chronic disease management.

Another incentive would expand physician residencies and other clinical training programs as well as provide incentives to encourage providers to live in rural Arkansas.

The last two incentives would incorporate digital health technology to improve care coordination in rural communities.

Specifically, the Promoting Access Coordination and Transformation program would integrate specialty care, preventative screenings, telehealth, and trauma-ready services into rural communities. And the Telehealth Health Monitoring and Response Innovation for Vital Expansion program would “leverage AI to provide coordinated patient records across delivery systems” as well as update emergency medical transport and services.