



# Initiative: Building a Sustainable Rural Healthcare Workforce

## Overview

This initiative strengthens the rural healthcare workforce through an incentive-based program that attracts, develops, and retains professionals across critical roles and care settings. By combining recruitment incentives such as sign-on bonuses, relocation assistance, and rural service stipends with education-focused supports like tuition assistance, paid clinical release time, and flexible training, the program ensures access to care in rural and frontier communities. Together, these strategies build a stable, skilled, and sustainable workforce.

## Key Activities

- Offer tiered sign-on bonuses, relocation assistance, and rural service stipends based on role and location. These incentives will help remove barriers to relocation and make rural healthcare positions more competitive in attracting highly skilled professionals. Participants will be required to sign five-year commitments.
- Provide current rural healthcare workforce with direct funding for education, certification, or leadership training tied to five-year rural service commitments.
- Collaborate with technical colleges and universities to expand accessible rural training pathways to include apprenticeship opportunities.

## Partners & Stakeholders

Licensed Healthcare Professionals, Rural Healthcare Facilities, Tribal Health Partners, Educational Institutions

## Amount Requested

- \$62,500,000 (five-year total)
- Begin statewide planning early 2026; staffing and kickoff mid-2026; implementation 2026.

## Expected Outcomes

- Increase the number of healthcare professionals practicing in rural and frontier communities through targeted recruitment incentives.
- Strengthen the stability of the rural healthcare workforce through long-term service commitments and education-based retention supports.
- Expand education and career advancement opportunities for healthcare professionals serving rural communities.
- Increase availability of care closer to home by expanding and stabilizing the rural healthcare workforce.

## Why This Matters

This initiative strengthens rural healthcare by building a stable, skilled, and sustainable workforce to serve rural South Dakotans for years to come.