

Statement of Work (SOW)

Initiative 9: Growing Our Rural Health Paraprofessional Workforce – Rural Healthcare Academies

I. Initiative Overview

Indiana faces persistent shortages of healthcare professionals in rural counties, where recruitment and retention challenges are most acute. This initiative focuses exclusively on expanding access to healthcare, behavioral and oral health career exploration for rural high school students through Rural Healthcare Academies delivered at multiple locations in all eight Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) regions. These academies will introduce students to career pathways in healthcare, behavioral and oral health settings, strengthen early interest in health careers, and support long-term workforce development and employee recruitment- in rural communities.

This approach builds on successful pilot programs that exposed high school students to healthcare careers, offering structured summer learning experiences that prepare rural students for future credentialing, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities.

II. Goals and Objectives

The initiative aligns with the RHTP's strategic goal of workforce development and training.

Objectives include:

- Expanding access to healthcare, behavioral and oral health career exploration for rural high school students.
- Increasing awareness of healthcare, behavioral and oral health career pathways across rural communities.
- Strengthening the rural workforce pipeline by preparing students for future rural healthcare, behavioral and oral health training, credentialing, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities.

III. Scope of Work

The initiative will be implemented at multiple locations in all eight RHTP regions. Activities include:

Rural Healthcare Academy Implementation

Plan, implement, and evaluate 8--week summer Rural Healthcare Academies beginning Summer 2027 and continuing in years 2028, 2029, 20230, and 2031.

- Each location within each region will enroll minimally 25 rural high school students annually.
- Academies will include classroom instruction, hands--on learning, exposure to healthcare, behavioral and oral health careers, and engagement with rural healthcare providers and employers in multiple settings.
- Launch Rural Healthcare Academies beginning Summer 2027 at multiple locations in all eight RHTP regions.
- Continue annual delivery of Rural Healthcare Academies in 2028, 2029, 2030, and 2031.
- Marketing of Rural Healthcare Academies including but not limited to developing and distributing marketing materials, curating social media posts, engaging rural healthcare, behavioral and oral health employers and secondary school networks, and RHTP Regional Coalitions.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Partner with K–12 school corporations, rural healthcare, behavioral and oral health providers, and community organizations to recruit students and deliver experiential learning opportunities.

IV. Deliverables

- Monthly, quarterly and annual reports identifying outcomes including enrollment, course completion, regional healthcare, behavioral and oral health partner participation, and credential, apprenticeship, and employment obtained by Rural Healthcare Academy participants.

V. Outcomes and Metrics

The initiative will track measurable outcomes at both regional and county levels:

- **Enrollment:** Minimum of 25 rural high school students per location in all eight RHTP regions annually.
- **Completion:** Target of an 80% completion rate across all locations in all eight RHTP regions.
- **County-Level Impact:** Annual reporting of enrollment and completion disaggregated by rural county.
- **Partner Participation:** Engage at least 1 of each of the following partners in each RHTP region: Clinical healthcare employer, community-based organization

healthcare-related employer, behavioral health employer, oral health employer, high school, and workforce council.

- **Academy Pipeline Connections Made:** Target of 30% of graduating seniors completing Rural Healthcare Academies connected to healthcare, behavioral and oral health credentialing, apprenticeships, or employment in rural communities

VI. Staffing and Governance

- **Project Manager:** Oversees initiative implementation, reporting, and coordination across all locations in all eight RHTP regions.
- **Regional Leads:** Manage local academy operations, recruitment, and performance metrics.
- **Faculty and Guest Speakers:** Deliver academy curriculum and experiential learning.
- **Administrative Support:** Coordinates logistics, reporting, and communication.
- **Marketing and Engagement:** Develop and distribute Rural Healthcare Academy materials to potential students, healthcare, behavioral and oral health employers, Regional Coalitions, and other regional partners.

Supervision will be provided by senior leadership with experience in statewide healthcare workforce initiatives to ensure alignment with workforce needs and sustainability.

VII. Stakeholder Engagement

The initiative will collaborate with:

- K–12 school corporations and high-school youth-serving organizations to recruit rural students.
- Rural healthcare, behavioral and oral health employers to host site visits, serve as guest speakers, and connect students to real world- healthcare, behavioral and oral health environments, credentials, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities.
- RHTP Regional Coalitions to ensure engagement of regional healthcare, behavioral and oral health providers in employing students completing Rural Healthcare Academies and alignment with local workforce needs.

IX. Evaluation Plan

Performance will be measured through enrollment and completion data, with annual reporting to the State. Metrics will include:

- Enrollment
- Academy completion
- Regional and county level -partner participation

- Connections for students to healthcare, behavioral and oral health credentials, apprenticeships, and rural employment

Outcomes will be benchmarked annually and tracked through FY31.

Conclusion

This initiative provides a scalable, region-based- solution to expand healthcare, behavioral and oral health career exploration for rural high school students. By focusing exclusively on Rural Healthcare Academies delivered across all eight RHTP regions, the program will strengthen early exposure to healthcare, behavioral and oral health careers and support long-term- workforce sustainability in Indiana’s rural communities.

Please submit a narrative proposal that includes: detailed staffing plan, 5-year implementation plan and timeline, stakeholder engagement plan, metrics and evaluation plan, sustainability plan, itemized budget and budget narrative via email to Shelbi Cummings at shcumplings@health.in.gov by Monday, May 25, 2026, 11:59 PM.

Please review the accompanying Federal Funding Requirements for RHTP.