

Workforce Development Recruitment and Retention (WDRR) Program

Frequently Asked Questions

July 27, 2026

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Section 1: Program Overview

1. What is the Workforce Development Recruitment and Retention (WDRR) Program?

The WDRR Program funds eligible organizations to retain Health Professionals already practicing in rural communities and to recruit eligible Health Professionals to qualifying rural sites. It does this through two types of bonuses: recruitment bonuses, including sign-on bonuses and other recruitment incentives, for Health Professionals recruited to qualifying rural sites, and retention bonuses for Health Professionals already practicing in rural communities.

2. What are the goals of the program?

The key goals of the WDRR Program are improved recruitment and retention of rural Health Professionals, reduced vacancy rates and improved continuity of care, and support for a responsive and sustainable healthcare workforce for rural California communities.

3. How much funding is available?

For Budget Period 1 (BP1), \$54,170,000 in CalRHT funding is available for the WDRR Program; \$1,000,000 per individual facility or \$2,000,000 per consortium, collaborative, or system for the BP1 award cycle.

Section 2: Eligibility

Organizations

4. Who can apply for a WDRR grant?

WDRR is an organizational grant program. Eligible applicants are rural-serving organizations and rural regional collaboratives. Individual Health Professionals are not eligible.

For more information, please refer to pages 5 – 7 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

5. Can organizations apply together as a group?

Yes. Multiple eligible organizations may apply together as a rural regional collaborative or consortium.

Eligible Health Professions

6. Which health professions are supported by WDRR bonuses?

WDRR supports Health Professionals who provide direct patient or client care at an

approved qualifying site physically located in a rural area of California, as defined by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

For more information on eligible disciplines, please refer to the WDRR Grant Guide on pages 6 - 7.

7. Are behavioral health providers eligible?

No, behavioral health-only roles are not eligible for WDRR bonuses. Organizations are encouraged to seek funding opportunities through HCAI's behavioral health specific workforce grants, <https://hcai.ca.gov/workforce/financial-assistance>.

Section 3: Grant Funding

Bonuses

8. How large can the bonuses be?

Recruitment and retention bonuses are each capped at \$150,000 per Health Professional per subaward cycle. For more information, please refer to the WDRR Grant Guide on page 9.

Allowable Costs

9. What can WDRR funds be used for?

Allowable uses of funds include:

- Recruitment bonuses tied to a five (5) year rural service commitment
- Retention bonuses tied to a five (5) year rural service commitment
- Program costs allowances
- Clinical training, faculty, and preceptor capacity-building activities
- Shared regional staffing pools across rural facilities
- Regional coordination and scheduling infrastructure
- Tribal health program recruitment and retention efforts
- Other direct costs pre-approved by HCAI as necessary and allocable to the program

For more details, please refer to page 9 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

Unallowable Costs

10. What can WDRR funds not be used for?

Unallowable costs include:

- Pre-award costs incurred before the grant agreement start date
- Construction, renovation, or building improvements
- Capital equipment purchases, such as computers, vehicles, or medical equipment
- Promotional items, advertising and public relations promoting the organization, meals (except in limited circumstances, allowed by federal cost principles), personal entertainment, or gifts
- Lobbying activities or political contributions
- Costs covered by any other HCAI program, federal grant, or employer reimbursement (non-supplantation)
- Provider Payments (CalRHT Use of Funds Category B) under the CalRHT initiative
- Duplicate payments to the same Health Professional across CalRHT initiatives or HCAI programs
- Indirect costs
- Payments to third-party contractors or service providers
- Any other cost determined by HCAI or CMS to be unallowable under applicable CMS Standard or Program Terms and Conditions, or under 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E
- WDRR funds may not be used to replace (supplant) funding from any other state, federal, local, or private source. If an employer reimburses any of the same costs, WDRR funds cannot also be applied to those same costs.
- The WDRR bonus may not be used to replace, offset, or partially cover a Health Professional's salary or wages.

For a list of unallowable uses of funds, please refer to pages 9-10 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

11. Since WDRR does not allow indirect costs, how are administrative costs covered?

In place of indirect costs, WDRR allows a program costs allowance of up to 10 percent of the total award amount. For more information, please refer to page 17 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

Section 4: Application Process

How to Apply

12. When and where can organizations apply?

The Organizational WDRR Program Application window opens July 31, 2026, and closes August 31, 2026. Organizational applicants must submit their applications by August 31, 2026, through the web-based WDRR Application Portal found at <https://hcai.ca.gov/rural-health/calrht/funding>.

Applicants with application questions or technical difficulties should contact the CalRHT team at info@calruralhealth.org.

Application Requirements

13. What does an organization need to submit with its application?

Organizations will need to submit documents, including but not limited to organizational entity documents, site verification documents, eligibility documentation, a high-level budget, and a work plan.

For a complete list of application requirements, please refer to pages 13-15 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

14. What should the Budget and Workplan include?

The high-level budget uses the HCAI-approved template and covers the requested funding categories. Applicants should list and cost their priority workforce needs in rank order, including amounts above the cap, so HCAI can assess and allocate based on demonstrated need.

The workplan uses the HCAI-approved template and describes the organization's plan for its recruitment and retention activities.

For additional information, please refer to pages 16-17 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

Review and Award

15. How are applications reviewed and scored?

Please refer to “Attachment A: WDRR Evaluation Criteria” located on pages 22-24 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

16. What is the award timeline?

HCAI plans to make awards in September/October 2026. This timeframe may fluctuate. Please refer to “Organizational WDRR Award Process” on pages 18-19 of the WDRR Grant Guide.

Section 5: Health Professional Service Obligation

17. What is the WDRR Service Obligation?

Every Health Professional who receives a WDRR recruitment or retention bonus commits to a uniform five (5) year Service Obligation, regardless of the bonus amount.

For additional information, please refer to the WDRR Grant Guide Attachment B on page 25.

18. What counts as full-time service and direct care?

Full-time service is a minimum of 32 hours per week providing direct patient or client care at an approved rural practice site.

For additional information, please refer to the WDRR Grant Guide Attachment B on page 25.

19. When must the obligation be completed?

Grant agreements between HCAI and awarded organizations expire on November 30, 2032, or earlier. The awarded organization must structure Health Professional Award agreements to ensure the five (5) year Service Obligation can be completed within this window.

20. Can a Health Professional take leave during the Service Obligation?

Yes. Please refer to the WDRR Grant Guide Attachment B on pages 26-28.

21. Can the obligation be waived or suspended?

Yes, in limited circumstances. Please refer to the WDRR Grant Guide Attachment B on page 27.

22. What happens if a Health Professional does not complete the service obligation?

A Health Professional who does not complete the Service Obligation retains amounts earned for completed service periods, forfeits entitlement to unearned payments, and,

where funds were disbursed ahead of earned service credit, must return the unearned portion in accordance with the award agreement.

For more information, please refer to the WDRR Grant Guide Attachment B on pages 27-28.

Section 6: Reference Links

23. Where can I find more information and who do I contact with questions?

The WDRR Grant Guide sets out all requirements, rules, and timeframes and is the authoritative source if anything in this document differs from it.

- Technical assistance with the application portal: email info@calruralhealth.org or call +1 855 CAL RHTP (855-225-7487)
- Application portal and required deliverables: <https://hcai.ca.gov/rural-health/calrht/funding>
- Webinar Information: <https://hcai.ca.gov/rural-health/calrht>
- For questions related to the WDRR Program or application, email HCAI staff at info@calruralhealth.org