



How to Create a Rural Health Capital Resources Council in Your State

Have you wondered how to increase access to capital for rural health in your state? Much of the expertise exists with organizations that may not typically be engaged with State Offices of Rural Health (SORH).

Creating a Rural Health Capital Resources Council (RHCRC) is a structured way to expand engagement with key stakeholders. The RHCRC aims to develop a strategic and sustainable approach to helping rural hospitals, healthcare organizations, clinics, communities, and nonprofits access the capital they need for infrastructure, new services, and addressing community health needs.

The RHCRC is structured to take a cross-sector approach, linking rural health expertise with organizations representing community development finance, housing, economic development, transportation and the many components that comprise healthy communities.



Is this an appropriate role for State Offices of Rural Health?

Several SORH are engaged in various partnerships and programs related to rural capital. At the Federal level, FORHP has supported NOSORH to develop a national RHCRC. The work aligns with the SORH roles of providing technical assistance for funding and healthcare improvement, increasing access to healthcare, and disseminating information. It offers an opportunity for strategic partnerships and leveraging resources.

How to Start

Many organizations that have a role in providing capital for rural communities and community facilities have an interest in being more engaged with rural communities and rural health. To get started, lean into the planning and collaboration skills you have built with your traditional work in rural health.

1. Conduct an environmental scan

Review the [NOSORH Capital Resources site nosorh.org/rural-health-capital-resources-council-project](https://www.nosorh.org/rural-health-capital-resources-council-project) and RHHub www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/capital-funding for ideas about organizations that provide capital for rural health.

2. Find your stakeholders and state contacts.

A few places to start (and, of course, include your existing rural health partners!):

- **Community Development Finance Institutions:** www.ofn.org/cdfi-locator
- **Small Business Administration:** www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-locations/sba-district-offices
- **US Department of Agriculture Rural Development:** www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices
- **State Agencies:** Contacts in economic development, commerce, healthcare finance, transportation, and housing
- **Philanthropy:** cof.org/page/community-foundation-locator; cof.org/page/philanthropic-infrastructure; Grantmakers in Health www.gih.org
- **Economic Development:** Appalachian Regional Commission www.arc.gov; Regional Development Organizations: www.nado.org/member-map
- **Healthcare Anchor Institutions:** healthcareanchor.network/about-the-healthcare-anchor-network

3. Create a short case statement

Why would bringing together rural health and capital resource organizations in your state be helpful?

How would it improve the health, well-being and vitality of rural communities?

How would it benefit the stakeholders?

4. Invite the Stakeholders

A sample invitation letter is included in Appendix A

5. Engage in strategic planning

It is helpful to think of this as similar to the process used in the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Network Planning and Development Grants. Be prepared to spend a year engaging stakeholders in building relationships, increasing understanding among partners, and developing goals and objectives for working together.

A helpful resource is the Build Healthy Places Playbook for New Rural Healthcare Partnership Models of Investment: www.buildhealthyplaces.org/tools-resources/build-healthy-places-network-playbooks

What will it take to fund the creation of a Rural Health Capital Resources Council?

Creating an RHCRC will be similar to other project development – dedicated staff time for planning, outreach, content development, meeting management and follow-up. A .25 FTE might be a ballpark for the planning year, as well as dedicated leadership investment in the process and partnership building.

What programs could a state RHCRC provide?

- Engaging partners to speak and provide training at your State Rural Health Conference and other educational venues
- Disseminating information on capital resources via your SORH website, newsletter, and social media
- Connecting CAHs and other rural health providers to capital resource agencies and resources for building projects and needs identified through Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA)
- Providing training on community development's role in improving health through investments in housing, economic development, transportation, food security, community facilities, early childhood, workforce and community capacity building
- Engaging capital resource organizations in the CHNA process and implementation plans
- Multi-sector strategic planning to increase capital resources dedicated to rural health projects and the drivers of community health and well-being
- Building partnerships with philanthropy, USDA, CDFIs, SBA and other organizations to expand technical assistance to rural communities for rural health
- Providing training on capacity building in communities, using models such as USDA Rural Partners Network Community Networks www.rural.gov/community-networks, LOR Foundation Community Connectors www.lorfoundation.org and similar models of community catalysts
- Developing policies, programs and projects with stakeholders and partners as the Council matures and develops strategic direction

Appendix A: Sample Invitation

Greetings!

I am writing to invite you to participate in a new state project designed to improve access to capital for rural health. We are convening an expert group to form the Rural Health Capital Resources Council. The Council is designed to build partnerships and strengthen state, regional and local collaboration. The goal of the Council is to develop a strategic and sustainable approach to helping rural hospitals, healthcare organizations, and clinics access the capital they need for infrastructure, new services, and addressing community health needs.

The Rural Health Capital Resources Council is structured to take a cross-sector approach, linking rural health expertise with organizations representing community development finance, housing, economic development and the many components that comprise healthy communities.

(Describe a kick-off meeting)

Council members will participate by sharing their knowledge and experience in three meetings. Two will be one-hour virtual meetings and one in-person meeting. Council members will also be asked to share their ideas for expanding access to capital resources for rural health through a key informant interview.

We hope you will join us in this important work. A calendar invitation will follow. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this project in more detail, please contact...

Sincerely,

SORH Director