

Rural Health Workforce Funding Programs Presented May 20, 2014

Rebecca: The Rural Assistance Center is an online resource database, yes, but really ultimately what we do here at RAC is to help rural communities and organizations in any way that we can. I always say that if you have a question about rural health and human service topic, you can call RAC. Either we'll have the answer or we'll find the answer or sometimes it doesn't exist.

Everyone who works here really just wants to make access to information easy and that's what we do. We are an online resource database that has a collection of funding, research and publications related to rural health and human service topics.

The Rural Assistance Center is a project that is housed within the University of North Dakota's Center for Rural Health and we're federally funded by the Office of Rural Health Policy and we partner with a number of organizations such as the World Policy Research Institute to provide the most accurate up-to-date statistics and information about rural America.

This is what our home page looks like and as you can see, you can find links to health and human service topics, news, featured resources, tools, maps and funding, which is the topic of today's webinar.

Who can use RAC services? Anyone. All of our services and information are completely free. There is no fee and we don't require registration, so we don't track you. Any of the customized assistance we provide is also given at no cost, so as we're going throughout this webinar, just keep that in mind.

My name is Rebecca Cruger and I'm a Web Content Associate within the Rural Assistance Center. My other thing is I manage the funding and opportunities database portion of the RAC site. I've been with the center now for about 2 years and I monitor a variety of different funders and watch more than 900 websites to see what types of programs are available for rural health and human service organizations. I monitor funding programs from entities like federal agencies, foundations and state governments and when a program becomes available, what I do is I look through the request for a proposal and I determine if rural entities could be eligible for the funds.

Then what I do is I take all the information that's in these often 20 or 30 page documents and I synthesize it into an easy to read 1 page document and I catalog it in the RAC database, so when we have an organization call in to RAC to ask if we know of any grant programs for a particular project, we can go through our database and easily assist them and find funding opportunities that are going to be right for their project.

Enough about me, I want to talk about you and your organizations. This webinar came about because we realized and we really learned that there may be a lack of knowledge about funding programs related to building the rural health workforce. Often workforce investment boards are extremely familiar with funding streams that come from the Department of Labor, but not necessarily so familiar with some of the programs that are offered through the Department of Health and Human Services.

Specifically what I'm going to talk about are some of the programs offered by the Health Resources and Services Administration or HRSA. The goal of this is to help foster a conversation about partnerships between workforce investment boards, educational institutions and state offices of rural health. Workforce boards often provide critical support to help change state laws to expand workforce. They help develop job opportunities among healthcare facilities and underserved communities. They help recruit candidates for training programs, connect graduates with employers and often help analyze workforce needs and trends.

Educational institutions are also uniquely poised to train healthcare students from diverse backgrounds in really culturally relevant ways to best suit the needs of the local populations within their states and state offices of rural health are also conveners, mostly in all aspects of rural health. They connect directly with rural communities and organizations. They also analyze workforce trends related to the rural health workforce. They work directly with healthcare facilities to help with recruitment and retention and oftentimes, they're the entities within the state that administer grant programs for healthcare.

Financial aid programs for healthcare student services and also the state loan repayment program for healthcare providers who are willing to practice in rural and underserved areas of the state.

When you put all these 3 entities together, you can see that they really can make a powerful difference in workforce shortages of a state. All 3 are really working in some of the same arenas, so a partnership between the 3 seems like it could be a natural fit. In fact, I reached out to some of the state offices of rural health and I asked if they had any examples of successful partnerships relating to the rural health workforce going on in their individual states and what followed really was a stream of stories that highlighted statewide and regional partnerships that have really made a difference.

These are some examples on the screen and as you can see, educational institutions, state offices of rural health and workforce investment boards often play crucial roles within the partnerships, so I wanted to highlight some of these successful partnerships so you can see that these have happened in states and

you can certainly reach out to some of the contacts in those states and see what's going on with the workforce boards in their states.

While partnerships provide a collective strength pooling resources, most of the time, projects need a little extra oomph, if you will, to gain traction and momentum and that's really where funding sources come into play. I often get asked the question why is funding so important that your entire job can be about finding grants and scholarships and the answer is this. It's because funding is important. Forty percent of the requests that we receive here at RAC have something to do with funding, whether it's finding dollars to implement a new project or money to sustain an already successful one and that's why we have a database of over 1200 funding programs and opportunities.

At any given point in time, we have 500 new or updated programs that are active in our database, which means that they're accepting applications. On our home page, this is where you can find the funding database here, circled in this little red area.

When you get into the funding section, you can search by type and I'm going to go over the different ways that you can search within the funding database. You can search by type. We have grants, loans, awards, incentives, scholarships and loan repayment programs.

You can also search by sponsor, so if you know a specific organization or a federal agency is responsible for operating a grant program, you can search by a specific sponsor. You can search by state. We have broken up the funding programs, so if you click on a state, you can see all of the funding that's available within that state on any given topic. You can also search by topic. We have 62 different funding topics within the system, such as job training and adult education. Then you can do a manual search. You can type in key words for what type of thing you're looking for and get information that way.

As I said, we have 62 different funding topics and some of the key topics that you might be interested in would be workforce, employment. We have job training and education and then also a guide dedicated to scholarships, fellowships and loan repayment.

When you choose a funding topic that you want to explore further, this is the type of page you'll be taken to. At the top of the screen what you'll find is national level programs and then down below, if you scroll down, you'll see state and regional opportunities that are only available to organizations working within a certain state.

Another thing to note is that the home page of any funding topic will only provide you with a list of the active programs that are currently accepting applications, but at the very top of the page here what you can find is a list of inactive programs that aren't currently accepting applications, but might do so again in the future. This is important, because then you can plan for future grant cycles and see which organizations have funded projects in the past.

When we're talking about grants, I want to talk a little bit about the organizations themselves. There are different types of funders and each type of funder has their own application process. You have federal funders and federal agencies. You have state agencies. You have foundations and then you have corporate foundations.

These are some of the federal agencies that are working in the area of rural health workforce. I'm going to be going into detail about some of their grant programs. Firstly, I'm going to talk about the Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Service Administrations, specifically the Office of Rural Health Policy and then I'm also going to talk a little bit about USDA Rural Development and then the National Health Service Corps scholarships and financial aid programs.

HRSA's Office of Rural Health Policy has 3 big grant programs that relate to workforce. The Rural Health Services outreach grant program will be released sometime this year, so that's something that you can continue to watch for. As I said, they're going to be released this summer or later on in the fall and the Rural Health Network Grant has 2 different components. They have a planning component and then there's one that is a development component. The planning program grants are offered annually and were last accepting applications in January of this year. The development grants are offered on a 3 year cycle and they were last open in December of 2013.

The Rural Health Services Outreach Grant program will award funding to programs that expand healthcare delivery through new or enhanced services and these services can include things like health education, health screenings or creating a network of providers. Funding is also available for programs that work to educate and train healthcare professionals for rural areas with workforce shortages. WIBs could partner with organizations like the colleges, universities and the state offices of rural health that I talked about before and they can create a network that helps to address health workforce shortage issues.

Obviously, colleges and universities would be responsible for the education portion of the program, but WIBs can be extremely valuable in identifying individuals who are in need of employment and need education and training to matriculate in high wage, high skilled jobs, such as those found in healthcare.

An example of a successful applicant to this outreach grant program is the Alaska Perioperative Nursing Consortium and this is the type of project that could be implemented through a network. Alaska, as you know, is highly rural and the state has a documented nursing workforce shortage, so the program only worked to recruit and train surgical nurses and place them at rural healthcare facilities throughout Alaska. Again, this is a grant program that's going to be opening up later this year so you can watch for it and I'd encourage you to take a look. You can click at the link on the top of the screen and it will take you to some of the requirements for creating the partnerships.

Also, the second grant program that I'm going to discuss is the Rural House Network Grant Program. As I said, plenty of grants are offered on an annual basis and they're for the establishment of healthcare networks, so it supports a year of planning to develop operational procedures, efficiencies and partnerships with other agencies to create a formal network.

The network has to consist of at least 3 partners who are working together to expand access and improve coordination of essential rural health services and to strengthen the rural health system as a whole. Development grants are the second portion of this grant program and they're for the full implementation of a plan put together by a formal health network, so the funds aren't directly to be used for the provision of services, but what they're really used for instead is to improve performance, quality measures and enhance the ability of the members of a network to really respond to changes in the healthcare environment.

Among other things, programs at work to increase the primary care workforce in rural areas are considered a priority goal of this grant program. I gave an example here of one of the funded workforce related programs, which is the Michigan Rural EMS Network and what they did within Michigan is they created a network that helped to recruit people to the EMS field, because they have documented EMS workforce shortages and so they worked to train a cadre of the EMS workers and also worked to develop cost saving programs for the EMS providers and so that's a type of program that could be a good partnership for a workforce investment board to get involved with.

The Rural Health Information Technology Workforce Program is an example of the type of programs that HRSA offers. Unfortunately, this program was only a one time funding opportunity and it's not really expected to be offered again in the future, but I wanted to talk about it and thought that it was important because these are the types of opportunities that are always posted on the Rural Assistance Center's funding pages. When things like this that are one time programs that are really innovative and workforce driven are open, you can know about them.

The grant was awarded to collaborations between educational institutions and other partners and what they really wanted was somebody to recruit, train and place students who are interested in careers in health information technology and on this grant, the grantees were strongly encouraged by HRSA to include workforce investment boards in their partnerships, so this is the type of thing that really you would want to know about when it came up.

The grant recipients of this program set up programs that were varied widely and some were even giving away complete scholarships to people who are interested in pursuing health information technology careers. Some programs were very successful in recruiting people to go into the HIT workforce and some programs actually had a lot of money that was left over at the end, so they asked for a grant extension so that they could find people who would want to take these free scholarships. Again, this is a place where organizations like Workforce Investment Board to have resources to help recruit a lot of people into a program would be an invaluable partner.

The Rural Health Workforce Development Grant Program offer 4 million dollars in grant funding across 6 different states and grantees worked to establish recruitment, retention and training programs for students interested in pursuing careers in rural primary and allied health fields. Again, on this grant, the grantees were strongly encouraged to partner with workforce investment boards on the development and implementation of their program. This is the grant program we reached out to HRSA and they said they may or may not offer this again in the future. It depends on the allocation of funding, but this is another one that you could look at closely when you're thinking about partnerships related to rural health workforce development.

Those were some of the programs that were offered by HRSA. I'm going to talk a little bit now about USDA and their rural development program. One of the programs I'm going to talk about is the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program. Connecting rural job seekers and employers in rural areas can be challenging, because of the proximity to the resources themselves and the proximity to potential employers, so workforce investment boards are often involved with prevocational training and help to get unemployed individuals back into the workforce through a new career path.

They can work to not only connect employers with employees, but also to provide a stream of potential students to colleges that have workforce training programs and the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant programs have often funded job training programs, projects and partnerships that center around raw health careers. This grant program provides funding for equipment and new technologies. For example, The Plainville Interactive Consortium Academic Network of Northwest Kansas, they added high

definition video equipment to classrooms to create opportunities for high school students in rural areas in the areas of nursing, sports medicine, emergency medical technology, home health care and pharmacy careers.

I talked a little bit with Sam Morgan, the project USDA Rural Development Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program and he said that he doesn't know of any projects that have had workforce investment board partners, but there have been successfully funded programs through job training centers and vocational schools, many of which have web affiliates. This is another funder who would be interested in proposals that involved workforce investment boards.

The Delta Health Services Grant Program is another funding program that's offered by USDA Rural Development and it's actually open right now. Applications are currently being accepted through June 13th of this year. A consortium of applicants have to apply and among other areas, funds can be used to create health education and training programs. Again, this is one that's open right now and if you click on the link there, it will take you directly to more information on the RAC site.

It's an example of a funding program that we have in our database that isn't national. It's considered regional, so the funds for this project can only be used in the Delta region of the United States and as you can see, again, it can be used to develop health education programs and healthcare training programs.

I've covered a couple of the federal agencies funding programs and there are definitely more within our database. I also wanted to take some time to cover some of the programs that could be most helpful to rural health partnerships from the foundation aspect. Foundations often have less rigorous application processes and can be really great sources of funding when it comes to state and regional projects, because they're very involved and really dedicated to the certain issues that they work on as a foundation.

I'm going to highlight a couple of them that could be approached for projects related to building the rural health workforce. The first one I'm going to talk about is the Hearst Foundation. This foundation supports job training programs, adult education programs, nursing workforce programs and advanced education programs. Those are some of the priorities that they've listed on their site. They have a ton of past grantees and they've awarded 9 million dollars in grant funding last year, according to the tax statement that they have on file and they accept applications throughout the year.

One example of a past project that was successful in getting funding is Climb Wyoming and it operates in regional areas throughout the state of Wyoming and it works to train and place low income single mothers in careers that will support

their families. Throughout the program, students receive support they need to be successful, so they receive scholarships, uniform assistance and job placement assistance and one of the career paths that a regional entity of Climb Wyoming offered was a CNA career path program.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is another potential funder for innovative partnerships that want to work in the area of rural health workforce development. It supports programs that, according to their website, develop meaningful pathways to employment, so career training programs, job training programs, small business and entrepreneurship programs and they really want to work to such a quality job, so they look for innovative partnerships and they also accept applications on an ongoing basis. In 2013, they awarded 259 million dollars across the nation.

An example of a project that they funded in the past would be they funded the National League for Nursing and although it was a national organization, this particular project worked within a state to develop a scalable model that trained nurses with minority backgrounds and then it worked to place them in underserved areas of Mississippi, because obviously Mississippi was having a documented nursing workforce shortage, so that's the type of project that the W. K. Kellogg Foundation would be interested in receiving proposals for.

One type of funder that often gets overlooked is the corporate foundation and these types of funders usually have distinct funding priorities that are not very flexible, but they usually receive so many funding requests throughout the year that building a relationship with them can be difficult. However, they can be a very valuable source of funds because they have a lot of funds at their disposal.

The Walmart State Giving Program is a prime example of this. It supports career skills or job training efforts that lead to placements. An applicant can apply for up to \$250,000 per year and the program is open twice per year it accepts applications. They have very short windows, time periods, usually about a month where they're open. I will also note that Walmart Corporate Foundation does change its funding priorities yearly, so workforce programs may not always be something they're interested in supporting, but they have said that this year it is one of their priority areas.

I wanted to give you an idea of just how many state level funders are working in the areas of the rural health workforce. Unfortunately, I don't really have time to cover all of them in detail, but I would like to let you know that if you have a specific project or partnership in mind, you can call me or any one of our information specialists. We'd be happy to talk to you about your project and what you have in mind. What we can do is we can work to develop really a customized dossier of funders who might be willing to support your project. The

dossier is based on your program requirements, what you want to do and the geographic location that you're working in.

What we'll do is we'll call through our database and we'll find the funding programs and funders who are working in your areas and then we'll also do a search of the foundation directory database, which has about 10,000 funders in it and we'll be able to identify funders that are working in very localized areas, as well. The foundation directory is a subscription based service, but we have a subscription and we'll search through it for you for free and we, all of our information specialists have been trained in how to search through that effectively based on your needs.

It might sound like I'm giving you a sales pitch here, but I just want to reiterate the fact that all of the Rural Assistance Center's services are completely free, including something like creating a customized funding dossier for your organization.

I also wanted to take some time to cover the financial aid and loan repayment sections of RAC's funding database. I know many workforce investment boards or their partners work to get individuals into high paying, high wage jobs and healthcare jobs are a prime example of those type of positions. Rural healthcare specifically is experiencing increasing shortages of providers, so to that end, what we have done is we have a list of scholarships that are available for health profession students who are working and willing to practice in rural and underserved areas of their state upon graduation.

We also have a database of loan programs that can help students manage the cost of health profession trainings, as well as a loan repayment section. We have on our site over 90 loan repayment programs. We also have a list of educational programs and opportunities for things like fellowships, internships and other things for students who want to get some practical experience.

As I said, we have over 90 loan repayment programs in our database for health professionals who are newly entering the workforce and these programs can help practitioners pay off their debt and help to provide workforce apprentice shortages.

One example are the state loan repayment programs, which will provide funding to help professionals pay off some or all of their medical debt in exchange for agreeing to practice in an underserved area or a rural area of their state and these programs vary from state to state, depending on a state's current workforce shortage, but they usually cover a host of different provider types and professions and our database has collected them all into one place and what we do is we update the deadlines yearly and the eligibility each year.

We also have information about the National Health Service Corps, which is a federal organization that provides scholarships and offers loan repayment to primary healthcare professionals, specifically doctors, dentists, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives and physician assistant students who agree to serve in federally designated health professional shortage areas of the U.S. Many of those shortage areas, as you know, are rural. The scholarship covers tuition and education related expenses, so basically the students are able to get almost a full ride for college. It also provides a monthly stipend for living expenses. So, students who have barriers to accessing education, these are some great programs.

Those are all of the programs that I'm going to highlight today, but again, I would really encourage you to call us if you have any questions about the funders working in your area. We can also provide resources, publications to support grant proposals and we can also work to answer questions about data and statistics, if you need that type of information. Our email address and toll free number are offered on this slide and I want to reiterate the fact that all of our services are free.

For those of you who hate cold calling, I'd like to introduce you to the people on the other end of the phone. Our information specialists are available Monday through Friday from 8 to 5 Central time and Mary Reinertson-Sand, Kathy Spencer and Holly Gabriel have worked at RAC either since its inception or shortly thereafter and they're extremely knowledgeable in all aspects of rural health and they've dedicated their careers to really helping organizations just like yours succeed. Brandon Baumbach is the newest addition to our information specialist team and our current policy specialist. He brings with him a host of policy related knowledge and he was a Fulbright scholar in Norway prior to joining RAC's team.

I would also encourage you all to sign up for our health and human services updates and The Rural Monitor newsletter. These are delivered right to your inbox and they highlight stories from the field, the latest news and funding opportunities that have just opened. Naomi Lelm that works on those newsletters. If you're only interested in receiving updates on a certain topic, like the job training and adult education, each of our funding pages has a little orange symbol right down here at the bottom and if you click on this, subscribe to RSS feed icon, all that means is that you'll be notified in your email every time a new funding program opened up within a topic, so it really gives you access to that information in the quickest fastest way and you'll never miss a funding opportunity that could help support your projects that way.

This is just some of the things that people say about the services on our site. We help people across the nation and organizations across the nation. I'd also like to

ask you guys, you can certainly help us spread the word by telling people about our services. You can provide links to our pages on your sites, if you'd like. Also, I wanted to mention that we will have a recording of this and a link to this recording posted on our site, so if you know somebody who didn't get a chance to listen, but wanted to, they could certainly go back and do it that way.

I thank you guys all for being a part of this webinar and I hope that I've helped teach you about some of the new programs that you can use to build the rural health workforce of the future. If you have any questions about the content of today's webinar, you can type it into the Q&A box located on the lower left-hand corner and I'm going to open it up for questions now.

I'm not seeing any questions that have come in as of yet, but you guys certainly can also email me personally or follow up with one of our information specialists after this webinar and again, I really appreciate you attending and I hope you have a great day.