

## South Carolina Rural Physician Incentive Grant Program: Incentive Information

The State Incentive Grant program provides funding to primary care physicians (Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, and Ob/Gyn) who contract for a period of four years to practice in rural or underserved areas of South Carolina in an outpatient setting. The program also provides funding to general surgeons and psychiatrists who contract for a period of four years to practice in rural or underserved areas of the state. All recipients must be licensed by the State of South Carolina and board certified. Applications are encouraged from residents who will be completing their training within the year, and it is expected that the resident will become board certified.

The Rural Physician Board recognizes the need for advanced practice professionals in underserved areas of South Carolina as well. The Rural Physician Board will accept applications from credentialed Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Midwives, and Physician Assistants who contract for a period of four years to practice in a rural or underserved area of South Carolina in an outpatient setting.

Specifically, the State Incentive Grant Program may:

- Provide \$25,000 per year for up to four years for qualified physicians practicing in counties with a population of less than 50,000.
- Provide \$15,000 per year for up to four years for qualified physicians in counties with a population over 50,000 who work in rural areas (non-urbanized)\* or who work in federally qualified health centers in urban areas.
- Provide \$12,500 per year for up to four years to Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) and Physician Assistants (PA) practicing in counties with a population of less than 50,000.
- Provide \$7,500 per year for up to four years for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) and Physician Assistants (PA) in counties with a population over 50,000 who work in rural areas (non-urbanized)\* or who work in federally qualified health centers in urban areas.
- Clinicians (physicians and advanced practice providers) working in state prisons may qualify.
- Half-time option (minimum of 20 hours per week) for half of the full-time (minimum of 40 hours per week) funding amount will be considered.

\*Please contact **Kristin Cochran** for assistance to determine eligibility of a specific practice address.

Counties with populations less than 50,000 (Abbeville, **Allendale**, **Bamberg**, **Barnwell**, Calhoun, Chester, **Chesterfield**, Clarendon, **Colleton**, Dillon, Edgefield, **Fairfield**, **Hampton**, Jasper, **Lee**, McCormick, Marion, **Marlboro**, Newberry, Saluda, **Union**, **Williamsburg**)\*\*

Counties with populations greater than 50,000 but less than 100,000 (Cherokee, Darlington, Georgetown, Greenwood, Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens, Oconee, Orangeburg)

Counties with populations greater than 100,000 (Aiken, Anderson, Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester (**St. George area** only), Florence, Greenville, Horry, Lexington, Pickens, Richland, Spartanburg, Sumter, York)

\*\***Bold Counties are Geographic Health Professions Shortage Areas (HPSA)**. Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are designated by HRSA as having shortages of primary care, dental or mental health providers and may be geographic (a county or service area), population (e.g. low income or Medicaid eligible) or facilities (e.g. federally qualified health center). Applicants to the Rural Physician Program receive additional points as part of the scoring process for service in a Geographic HPSA as these areas are in greatest need of primary care services in the state.

## **South Carolina Rural Physician Incentive Grant Program Information**

The Legislature of South Carolina provides that the Medical University of South Carolina is the state agency responsible for administering the South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium (South Carolina AHEC) program. A high priority of South Carolina AHEC is the recruitment and placement of health care providers. The state legislature has provided funds to South Carolina AHEC to assist in the recruitment and placement of primary care physicians in designated underserved areas of South Carolina.

### **Overview:**

The State Incentive Grant program provides funding to primary care physicians (Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, and Ob/Gyn) who contract for a period of four years to practice in rural or underserved areas of South Carolina in an outpatient setting. The program also provides funding to general surgeons and psychiatrists who contract for a period of four years to practice in rural or underserved areas of South Carolina. The amount of the award will vary with the minimum award being \$60,000 and the maximum award being \$100,000 depending upon the type of practice setting and the population of the county. All recipients must be licensed by the State of South Carolina and board certified. Applications are encouraged from residents who will be completing their training within the year, and it is expected that the resident will become board certified.

To be eligible for the State Incentive Grant program, all applicants must be U.S. citizens and are not eligible for consideration if they have previously received an award from the Rural Physician Incentive Grant Program or the Rural Physician Loan Repayment Program. Providers must also have practiced in the community for less than five years to be eligible for the program.

The Rural Physician Board recognizes the need for advanced practice professionals in underserved areas of South Carolina as well. The Rural Physician Board will accept applications from credentialed Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Midwives, and Physician Assistants who contract for a period of four years to practice in a rural or underserved area of South Carolina in an outpatient setting. The amount of the award will vary with the minimum award being \$30,000 and the maximum award being \$50,000 depending upon the type of practice setting and the population of the county. The number of awards may vary from year to year based on the demand for limited funds.

### **Board:**

The program is administered by South Carolina AHEC and managed by the Rural Physician Board, the members of which are defined in the South Carolina Code of Laws. This board meets periodically to vote on applicants and to discuss other items of business. The Rural Physician Board is composed of representatives from the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association, the South Carolina Medical Association, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, the South Carolina DHEC, the South Carolina Hospital Association, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the USC School of Medicine, an appointee of the South Carolina House of Representatives Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs Committee, an appointee of the South Carolina Senate Medical Affairs Committee, and three at-large members with two representing nursing and one representing allied health sciences.

## **Application Process:**

**For the funding period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025:** Applications will be accepted until March 15, 2024, and considered by the Rural Physician Board shortly thereafter. No late applications will be accepted. Providers whose applications are approved will be notified in July and awarded contracts effective July 1, 2024. Emails will be sent to all applicants indicating if they were approved or not approved.

## **Priority:**

The intent of this program is to assist physicians and advanced practice professionals in establishing or joining practices in rural or underserved areas. Ideally, during the four-year period of commitment, they will develop viable practices and become involved in their communities, so that they will continue practicing in the area after the funding period is over. Priority for this program will be given to those demonstrating need and expressing honest intent to remain in the underserved area once funding is completed. Candidates are prioritized using an objective checklist that awards points in the following categories: Community Need, Specialty, Retention Factors, Underrepresented Minority, and Committee Recommendation.

## **Contract:**

Accepted providers will sign a contract with South Carolina AHEC and MUSC to practice medicine in an underserved area for a designated amount of time. The terms of the contract stipulate that all providers will accept both Medicare and Medicaid patients and their practice not discriminate against any person on the basis of their ability to pay. Continuation of the contracts from year to year is contingent upon the availability of funds allocated by the South Carolina General Assembly and a contract from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Accepted providers are expected to maintain an outpatient primary care practice at the designated location.

## **Payment:**

Payment schedules will be determined by the total amount of award and will be included in the contracts. Payments are made annually at the end of the contract year. If the practitioner leaves the employment of the practice during the contract year, the practitioner will be considered to have terminated the contract and will not receive the annual payment.

## **Contact Information:**

Kristin C. Cochran, MHA  
Director of Recruitment and Retention Programs  
South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium  
(p) 843-792-6977 [cochrak@musc.edu](mailto:cochrak@musc.edu)  
[Recruitment & Retention | SC AHEC](#)