



**PREVIEW ONLY - NOT FOR SUBMISSION**

## **2027 AHA Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award**

The 2027 American Hospital Association (AHA) Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award application period is open. The Award seeks to recognize and amplify the accomplishments of rural hospitals that exemplify responsiveness, innovation and excellence in developing, implementing and/or sustaining programs and services.

The organization should be advancing and improving programs, care redesign, collaboration, or technology solutions to address emerging health care challenges, ensuring progress in patient and community health and well-being in rural, remote, and frontier areas of the U.S. and territories.

Examples of areas of emerging application of advanced programmatic, care redesign, collaboration and technology solutions may include, but are not limited to:

- Utilization of telehealth services, wearable patient/consumer technologies, remote patient monitoring systems, and artificial intelligence-powered (AI) platforms used in response to the remote patient and community needs of rural and frontier areas of the country and territories.
- Implementation of advanced cybersecurity measures to protect the integrity of patient information, support systems and devices, and the overall system of care. This may include approaches such as cybersecurity frameworks and collaborations, employee training, vendor requirements and rigor testing, and proactive defense mechanisms against cyber or other intrusive threats.
- Integration of AI to address issues such as access to care, advanced diagnostics, or personalized care in rural hospital setting, workforce shortages, administrative burden, health plan coverage denials or delays, or communication tools to improve patient/consumer health literacy and/or adherence to care plan.



One winner and up to three finalists will be honored at the 2027 AHA Rural Health Care Leadership Conference, Jan. 31 - Feb. 3, 2027, in Orlando. One representative from each honored organization will receive complementary registration, airfare, and two hotel nights to attend the conference.

### **Eligibility**

Rural hospitals that are American Hospital Association members in good standing are eligible to apply for this award. For more information on the definition of rural hospitals, please see: AHA Rural Definition.

**Please note:** Only one hospital per health care system is eligible to apply. If your hospital is a member of a health care system, please contact system leadership to ensure only one hospital applies from your system.

**Applications submitted by vendors and consultants will not be reviewed.**

### **Evaluation and Judging**

Members of the AHA Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award Committee review applications and select the winner and finalists. AHA is grateful for the extensive volunteer contributions made by Committee members.

### **Requirements**

The program or services described in the application must have been operational for **a minimum of 18 months** and have **measurable data to demonstrate the impact and sustainability**.

In addition, honored programs must:

- Identify a key leader willing to participate in a panel discussion at the AHA Rural Health Care Leadership Conference.
- Participate in outreach and education throughout the year.

Applications become AHA property and may be used for best practices and case studies. In these cases, AHA will contact the organization to explore its interest in participating.

### **Deadline**

Applications are due by **noon Central Time, Tuesday, June 23, 2026**. We are unable to accept late applications.

### **Additional Guidance**

- Use concise, bullet-pointed responses with clear examples. If a system or mechanism that you have already described as a response to one question is also relevant to another answer, please



## Sponsor

The AHA Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award is generously sponsored by Microsoft.

### Please note:

- The application must be submitted through this online platform. Applications and/or supporting documents sent via email will not be accepted.
- Answer all questions marked with an asterisk. If a question doesn't apply, enter "NA."
- Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- Submitted applications cannot be modified or edited.
- The application portal closes at **noon Central Time, Tuesday, June 23, 2026**. No extensions will be granted.
- After submission, you will receive a confirmation email. If you don't see it in your inbox, check your clutter/spam/junk folder.
- The confirmation email will include a survey on your experience submitting an application. All responses are anonymous, and they will help us improve the application process.

Contact the AHA Rural Hospital In Excellence Award Team at [ruralaward@aha.org](mailto:ruralaward@aha.org) with questions.

### Begin Your Application

To begin your application, close this tab. If you applied for any AHA award last year and don't recall your login credentials, please click on [Forgot your password](#) to access your account and begin a new application. If you did not apply last year, create an account on the application portal to start, save, and return to your application. Only one account per organization is allowed. When the application is complete, click "Save and Finalize."

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### 2027 Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award

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#### Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Instructions

Please click [here](#) and read all instructions before completing this application.

Questions with a red asterisk are required. If you cannot complete all fields, please enter 0 or NA.

To preview the application before starting your submission, click here: [Rural application preview](#).

#### Acknowledgement

By checking this box, I confirm that I have reviewed all instructions and requirements before beginning this application.

I confirm

#### Hospital and Contact Information

##### Hospital Name

##### Health System Name (if applicable)

(if wholly owned or affiliated rural hospital)

##### Salutation

##### Contact First Name

##### Contact Last Name

##### Degrees/Certifications

(e.g. MD, RN, etc)

##### Contact Job Title

**Contact Email Address****Contact Phone #****Primary Address****Street Address****Line 2****City****Country****State / Province****Zip / Postal Code****Where did you learn about the AHA Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award?**

Select all that apply.

- AHA Meeting/Conference
- AHA Regional Executive
- AHA Member-Led Group (e.g., Rural Health Services Committee or RPB)
- AHA Rural Email or Newsletter
- AHA Rural Health Services Team
- AHA Website
- Health Care Colleague/Executive
- Microsoft Email or Newsletter Referral
- Rural Health Services Committee Member
- Social Media
- Other

**Acknowledgment**

The following should be read and acknowledged by the **hospital president/CEO and board chair**:

*We acknowledge and support this application, confirm that the information provided is accurate, that there are no outstanding clinical, financial or legal matters that would preclude the organization from being considered for the AHA Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award and that the AHA has permission to use and disseminate the information as part of the application process.*

I agree

**President/Chief Executive Officer's Name**

**Official Title**

**Today's Date**

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Save and Next

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2027 Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award

Contact Info and Agreement  Organizational Demographics  **Organizational Innovation** 

**Organizational Demographics**

**Hospital Ownership**

- Independent
- Part of a system

**Type of Hospital**

- Government, nonfederal
- Nongovernment, not-for-profit
- Investor-owned, for-profit
- Government, federal

**How many acute care beds are currently set up and staffed for use in your hospital?**

- CAH with 25 or fewer beds
- 25-50 beds
- 51-100 beds
- 101-299 beds

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## 2027 Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award

Contact Info and Agreement > Organizational Demographics > **Organizational Innovation** ▶

### 1. Overview, Development, and Implementation of Innovation

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#### A. Identifying Innovation and Service Opportunities

Describe the initiative or service featured in the application including how the need was identified. Detail the resources invested to initiate and sustain it, short-term goals, population and patient demographic reach, organizational approach and how it differentiates your hospital.

Word count: 0 / 500

#### B. Development and/or Implementation

How has your hospital developed and/or implemented emerging or innovative community health or care delivery approaches that leverage technologies, processes, or services to enhance clinical access and outcomes, and operational performance? Please describe how these initiatives have improved outcomes or quality of life for patients and the broader community.

Word count: 0 / 250

### 2. Approach to Innovation

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#### Organizational Approach to Innovation

Describe how your hospital's leadership, governance, and organizational culture prioritize and support innovation. In your response, include strategies that encourage new ideas, systems that support staff and clinicians, and ways in which patients or families contribute to innovative solutions.

Word count: 0 / 250

### 3. Partnerships and Sustainability

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#### Collaboration, Community Engagement, and Sustainability

Describe the internal and external partnerships, community engagement strategies, or collaborative efforts that support this initiative. Explain how these relationships contribute to the program's sustainability and long-term success.

Word count: 0 / 250

### 4. Scale and Spread

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#### Scalability and Broader Application

Please describe the likelihood of scalability and broad application of your innovative programs or services, and how they can be adapted to benefit other rural hospitals and communities.

Word count: 0 / 250

### 5. Impact

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#### Impact

Please describe how the efficacy of your program or project is measured using the following metrics:

- **Health Outcomes:** Improvements in patient health, such as reduced disease incidence, lower mortality rates, or better management of chronic conditions.
- **Process Measures:** Efficiency of health care delivery, such as wait times, adherence to clinical guidelines, and patient throughput.
- **Patient Satisfaction:** Surveys and feedback to gauge patient experience and satisfaction with the care provided.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Analysis of the costs associated with the program relative to the health benefits achieved

Word count: 0 / 250

## 6. Patient or Recipient Testimonials

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### Testimonials

In addition to data, substantiate application through storytelling via the voice of the patients, caregivers or community partners. Minimum of one selection required.

Options:

- Submit a short written narrative (250 words max)
- Submit up to 5 photos
- Submit a video (5 minutes max)

## 7. AHA Principles

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### Alignment with AHA Principles

Explain how the featured program or service advances AHA principles:

- Provide timely access to the full continuum of health care services
- Provide coverage and care that is affordable.
- Minimize disparities in health outcomes.
- Be safe, high quality, reliable and evidence based.
- Be sustainable staffed with a ready workforce and safe workspaces.
- Be economically viable and appropriately resourced.
- Be innovative, transformative, environmentally conscious and data driven.
- Be committed to coordination and collaboration across all stakeholders.
- Be person-centered and oriented around the individual.

Word count: 0 / 250

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Save

Save and Finalize

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**You have successfully submitted an AHA Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award application. Thank you!**

Winning organizations will be notified in November.

Please complete a short survey to share your experience with the application and the online platform. Your feedback will help us enhance the process for future applications.

The AHA Rural Hospital Excellence in Innovation Award is sponsored by Microsoft. For questions about the Award, please contact [ruralaward@aha.org](mailto:ruralaward@aha.org).

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