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- Independent rural hospitals experience high costs for supplies, equipment, and contracted services because they do not have the volume to benefit from cost savings that are offered to larger healthcare systems.
- There is a higher cost to recruiting and retaining healthcare providers, administration, and leadership to rural areas. Rural communities do not offer all of the amenities of larger metropolitan areas. Without the volume of this workforce in rural communities, hospitals are having to pay the cost to keep the current workforce from leaving and, at the same time, pay staffing agencies the costs to ensure retention of services.

**Applicant Description:** Nobody understands the needs of rural hospitals like the leaders that work in rural hospitals. The Arkansas Rural Health Partnership (ARHP) is a non-profit organization of 17 rural hospitals, two Federally Qualified Health Centers, and three medical schools where member rural hospitals are committed to remain autonomous for as long as they can. These hospitals understand that by partnering together and combining forces there is leverage in numbers giving them an advantage; especially when it comes to cutting operational costs, increasing access to healthcare services, improving quality of care, and addressing the needs of their patients and residents through population health initiatives, assistance services, and mental and behavioral health services and shared programs. ARHP offers its members multiple advantages; like purchasing power and discounts, contract negotiation, medical training, information technology, recruitment, and most recently, the formation of a Clinically Integrated Network. The organization works at keeping resources in rural areas and contracts with its member hospitals for services to support partnering hospitals. The organization is pursuing lowering costs for employee benefits, workers' compensation, and medical malpractice insurance, along with business office procedures. This would be done in partnership with members only or possibly partnering with a larger health system. ARHP priorities have an emphasis on finding new approaches and organizational frameworks to improve health outcomes, control costs, increase the rural workforce, and improve population health. Education, financial assistance, and an experienced, educated, and competent support system to pursue the changes needed to survive would prevent our rural hospitals from closing. ARHP administration and leadership have vast knowledge and experience as healthcare administrators, hospital financial professionals, recognized rural health experts, grant writers, fundraisers in place. The organization is ready to provide immediate support to rural hospitals across the state.