

## *Project Overview*

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### **Project Concept Opportunity\***

Briefly describe the problem or opportunity you want to address with this project.

SPH currently lacks cardiopulmonary rehabilitation services. Patients recovering from myocardial infarction, coronary artery bypass grafting, heart failure, COPD, or other chronic cardiopulmonary conditions must travel 150 miles or more roundtrip for therapy. For many people—especially seniors and those with limited transportation or fixed incomes—travel barriers result in low participation or no rehabilitation at all.

Alaska's RHTP identifies chronic disease burden, limited specialty access, and insufficient long-term care capacity as major rural challenges. The Kenai Peninsula's aging demographic intensifies this need. Without local rehabilitation services, patients face higher risk of deconditioning, preventable readmissions, functional decline, and institutionalization.

At the same time, demand for inpatient PT and OT as well as speech therapy for pediatrics and adults remains strong. The SPH Long Term Care and Acute Care Departments rely on inpatient PT and OT to ensure the health of patients and residents, and speech therapy services are offered as both in- and outpatient care. Temporarily rehoused to make room for SPH's new integrated women's health clinic, these services are currently located in a temporary space within the hospital, awaiting final location in a purpose-designed location within hospital walls.

### **Project Concept Approach\***

Please describe your proposed approach to the above problem or opportunity.

The Kenai Peninsula has a disproportionately high senior population (22%) compared to both Alaska (16%) and the nation (18%). Older adults experience significantly higher rates of cardiovascular and pulmonary disease and need cardiopulmonary rehabilitation to promote health.

To truly transform health in Alaska's rural communities, we must make healthcare accessible, high quality, and sustainable over the long-term. On the southern Kenai Peninsula, our communities prioritize local access to care. In many cases, if individuals can't find the care they need at SPH, they must travel 150 miles on a highway that is dark and icy for half the year, or even farther to Anchorage. For many people, this isn't just impractical, it is impossible. And for some types of care—especially rehabilitation and therapy, which typically require frequent visits over an extended period of time (twice weekly for 18 weeks)—local availability of care is the difference between patients receiving the services they need or not receiving them at all. Based on strategies developed to address key findings of recent SPH Community Health Needs Assessments, this project represents a proactive investment in to position SPH to provide essential services to the region's aging population and existing inpatient and outpatient populations long into the future.

This project will renovate 1,900 square feet of existing hospital space to support cardiopulmonary rehabilitation as well as physical, occupational, and speech therapy. This project will establish a cardiopulmonary rehabilitation program designed to meet evidence-based CMS standards. Design of the new

space will be concluded this spring. Equipment purchases for cardiopulmonary rehab include a treadmill, recumbent ellipticals, stationary bikes, weights, and monitoring devices.

SPH will:

1. Renovate 1,900 square feet of space recently vacated by behavioral health services for therapy and rehab. Equip space for a new cardiopulmonary rehab service line as well as continued PT/OT/speech therapy.
2. Recruit one new RN or therapist and cross-train existing therapists and nurses for cardiopulmonary rehab.
3. Technology Integration: Integrate wireless remote monitoring capabilities and data tracking tools within Epic.
4. Care Coordination: Develop referral pathways for cardiopulmonary rehab with SPH primary care, hospitalists, cardiology consultants, and Anchorage specialty providers to ensure seamless post-acute transition.

## Project Concept Preliminary Outcomes\*

What change would you expect to see if this project is successful and on what timescale?

Within 12 months of implementation, SPH anticipates:

1. About 515 cardiopulmonary therapy patient visits during Year 1 (consistent with Anchorage utilization rates of 0.29–0.57% from Alaska Hospital and Healthcare Association data)
2. Improved patient functional capacity as measured by standardized exercise tolerance metrics
3. Reduced 30-day and 90-day readmission rates for participating cardiac patients
4. Improved quality-of-life scores among enrolled seniors
5. \$215,376 in net patient revenues

Within 24–36 months, SPH expects:

1. About 530 - 536 patient visits annually
2. Measurable reduction in preventable cardiac and pulmonary readmissions
3. Increased percentage of eligible post-cardiac event patients participating in rehabilitation
4. Strengthened coordination between acute care and outpatient services
5. Diversified revenue stream supporting hospital sustainability
6. \$232,381 - \$245,825 in net patient revenues annually

Rehab/Therapy and Quality Departments will track progress on these metrics through Epic and RLDatix occurrence reporting systems, analyze quarterly and adjust workflows as necessary.

This program supports RHTP's objectives to reduce chronic disease burden, improve outcomes for dual-eligible seniors, and expand specialty access and services in rural communities. Long-term impact includes improved independence among seniors, reduced downstream health expenditures, and enhanced community health on the Kenai Peninsula.

## Project Concept Sustainability\*

How will the change initiated by this project persist after the project ends?

SPH is a lead collaborator with MAPP, our region-wide health coalition, and this initiative emerges directly out of combined efforts to identify and address health challenges. The development of senior-specific healthcare services is one strategy that has emerged out of this collaborative work.

Based on Anchorage utilization rates from AHHA, between 0.29% and 0.57% of the population utilizes cardiopulmonary rehabilitation services annually. Applied to SPH's service area of approximately 15,000 residents, this suggests measurable and sustained local demand. The addition of the cardiopulmonary rehab services is expected to generate net revenue of over \$215,375 in year one and increase to \$274,971 in year five as volumes ramp up. Cardiopulmonary rehab is reimbursable under Medicare and commercial insurance, providing a sustainable long-term funding stream once established. This increase in revenue will ensure program sustainability. Additional increases in revenue in rehabilitation therapy are also expected as services onsite will increase with increases in the local aging demographic and observed increases in long term care and acute care censuses. An increase of even 6 acute patients/residents that have 30 days of therapy per month is about 180 skilled therapy days per month generating \$36,000 monthly or \$432,000 annually, which will ensure continuity of these important services.

### Project Concept Key Risks or Uncertainties\*

What potential risks do you anticipate, and what is your plan to mitigate them?

Any project in rural Alaska is vulnerable to supply chain issues, delivery delays, weather or natural disaster interruptions, and other challenges related to getting materials and expertise to remote locations. To mitigate these uncertainties, SPH will secure early procurement of long-lead equipment and supplies. Importantly, design for the new space will be complete in 30 days, which means that this project will be RFP-ready within 1 - 2 months.

Additional risks include lower-than-expected enrollment and workforce recruitment challenges. To ensure sustainable patient levels, SPH will work proactively on referral development with hospitalists and primary care providers. And SPH will strategically market these new capabilities through advertising, SPH's frequent education and outreach programs, the annual SPH/Rotary Health Fair, and other means. To mitigate workforce uncertainties, SPH will cross-train existing rehabilitation and respiratory staff to carry out cardiopulmonary rehab.

### Project Partnerships\*

Do you have key partners identified for this project?

No, partners are not needed for this project.

## *Readiness & Scope Snapshot*

### Stage of Development\*

Please assess the current stage of your proposed project. Your answer does not commit your LOI to a specific funding pathway but rather informs understanding of the project's development stage.

**RHTP funding is available for all pathways.**

**Concept Formation:** The project is taking shape, but key elements are still being developed. Scope, partners, budget and workplan details have not yet been established. Funding at this stage would support refining the project concept, early coordination, and building administrative readiness to prepare for a full project application.

**Defined Approach:** The project has a defined approach that aligns with RHTP goals. The scope and deliverables are partially defined, there is a general sense of the budget, partners have been identified, and roles are generally understood. Some administrative, staffing, and evaluation infrastructure capacity is in place. Early thought has been given to long-term sustainability and scalability. Funding at this stage supports critical planning efforts to strengthen and refine a detailed project workplan to prepare for implementation.

**Ready to Launch:** The project has a complete plan aligned with RHTP goals, with clear scope, objectives, budget, milestones, and deliverables. Partners are committed, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and staffing, resources, and infrastructure are in place. The approach is supported by data collection, evaluation, and monitoring systems. Project sustainability is built into the design. Funding at this stage supports immediate execution of projects that advance rural health transformation goals.

Ready to Launch

### RHTP Initiative Areas\*

RHTP funding supports projects aligned with Alaska's six RHTP initiatives. Funded projects may work across more than one initiative. Based on your current project approach, select all that apply.

Health Care Access  
Healthy Communities

### RHTP Allowable Uses\*

RHTP projects must align with and advance Alaska's goals and six RHTP initiatives and strengthen access, quality, coordination, and sustainability of health care, particularly in rural and remote communities. Federal law allows RHTP funds to be used for the activities listed below in support of these initiatives. Based on your current project concept, select all that may apply. (Note: for more information on the RHTP allowable uses, see the Alaska Department of Health RHTP webpage).

Appropriate care availability  
Capital expenditures and infrastructure  
Prevention and chronic disease

### Estimated Project Duration\*

Based on your project concept, how long do you anticipate needing to complete the proposed work?

12 months

### Project Duration\*

Please explain if your project has multiple phases, dependencies, or other nuances to the project duration.

N/A

### Estimated Funding Range for First Year of Funding\*

While RHTP is a five-year initiative, funding will be awarded annually. For the project scope you outlined, what resources do you anticipate needing for this funding round's project period?

\$250K-\$1M

### Future Funding Needs\*

Please describe future funding needs for this project (beyond this project period). If you are unsure of future funding needs, please indicate that below. If you do not have funding needs beyond this project period, please write "N/A."

N/A

### Potential Support Needs\*

In addition to grant awards, RHTP will include opportunities for grantee learning and support. To gauge potential offerings, what potential support might you be interested in?

None at this time

## *Acknowledgements & Certifications*

### Acknowledgements & Certifications\*

I understand that submission of this Registration & LOI does not guarantee funding and may result in an invitation to submit a Full Proposal, a request for refinement, or deferral to a future cycle.

I certify that:

- No funds received under this award will be used for lobbying activities.
- I will not attempt to influence government officials on decisions related to this award or other legislative or administrative matters using awarded funds.
- Awarded funds will not be used for religious proselytizing or activities intended to promote or discourage adherence to a particular religious faith.

Yes

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