

Kenai Peninsula Borough

Project Reach*

How many Alaskans will be served by the project?

10,000-24,999

Populations Served*

What populations will be served by your project? Select all that apply.

Alaska Native peoples
 Alaskans with behavioral health and substance use disorders
 Alaskans with complex care needs
 Alaskans with or at risk of chronic disease
 Children and youth
 Elders and older Alaskans
 Health care workforce
 Pregnant and postpartum women
 Rural Alaskans

Serving Rural Alaskans*

Please describe how your project will improve access, quality, or sustainability of health care for rural, remote or frontier communities.

South Peninsula Hospital (SPH) is owned by the Kenai Peninsula Borough and operated by South Peninsula Hospital, Inc., a locally governed 501(c)(3), and one of only three independent Critical Access Hospitals remaining in Alaska. SPH serves a population of 15,000 that substantially swells during the summer. SPH will hire a full-time, 12-month Housing Coordinator to set up enduring systems and processes to secure and manage temporary and transitional housing for traveling healthcare providers and newly recruited employees. Workforce housing is one of the most significant barriers to a strong and stable workforce, and is a barrier to sustainable healthcare access in rural Alaska. This is especially true in the Homer area where short-term rentals have put extraordinary pressure on the housing market.

SPH is in a HRSA-designated Health Professional Shortage Area. Limited housing availability adds extra barriers to recruitment in a competitive hiring environment, potentially delaying onboarding, increasing vacancy durations, raising reliance on costly locum tenens staffing, and threatening continuity of care.

Alaska's RHTP identifies severe workforce shortages, infrastructure challenges, and housing limitations as critical system barriers in rural communities. SPH's project directly advances RHTP Initiative #5 Strengthen Workforce and Initiative #2 Health Care Access by stabilizing and expanding provider capacity through non-clinical infrastructure support.

Leveraging a new SPH-dedicated housing development of 25 units scheduled to open in early summer as well as local properties with various owners, the Housing Coordinator will function as a centralized property manager to ensure seamless transitions for traveling and permanent staff. Importantly, this new position will bridge the transition to the new housing development, and set up systems that will streamline housing coordination in a permanent way into the future.

By reducing recruitment barriers and shortening time-to-service for clinicians, this project will:

1. Improve healthcare access and quality by reducing staffing gaps, boosting provider recruitment, and enhancing continuity of care.
2. Strengthen healthcare sustainability by reducing reliance on temporary staffing, supporting successful recruitment, and setting up systems that will streamline housing coordination into the future.

Project Overview

Project Concept Opportunity*

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

SPH's two most recent, collaborative Community Health Needs Assessments identify housing as a top community priority alongside staff workforce shortages—underscoring that housing constraints are directly linked to healthcare capacity on the southern Kenai Peninsula. The Assessment also recognizes that stable housing can have significant impacts on health outcomes. SPH is one of the largest (if not the largest) institutional renters of housing units on the southern Kenai Peninsula, substantially adding pressure to an already-tight market.

Over the last two and half years, as SPH has added new service lines and expanded existing departments and ancillary services, the organization's workforce has increased 17%, from about 600 to 700. We're likely to see continued workforce growth as SPH works to meet the growing healthcare needs of an aging population. Delivering these services—especially through expansion—requires an ample and flexible housing stock as SPH has relied on visiting and traveling clinicians as well as newly recruited providers relocating to the area. SPH currently rents 26 housing units in Homer to support traveling clinicians and new hires. Short-term clinicians require 2 - 10 days of housing, and SPH offers 3 - 12 months of housing for new employees relocating to the area. The ability to offer temporary housing is a meaningful recruitment lever in a highly competitive market. As with other rural Alaska facilities, SPH is in a Health Professional Shortage Area.

Project Concept Approach*

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

SPH has already taken meaningful steps to strengthen workforce recruitment and retention—and reduce its contribution to the local housing crunch—by partnering with a private contractor to construct 25 new SPH-dedicated housing units, which will be available in early summer but will not totally alleviate the hospital's need to rent additional properties around the region. A dedicated housing coordination function is a direct mitigation strategy to reduce reliance on expensive stopgap staffing as well as a proactive strategy to support workforce and service expansion.

Delays in securing housing can postpone start dates, increase vacancy periods, elevate contract staffing costs, and reduce service availability. This project addresses the opportunity to create a structured housing coordination model that removes a primary non-clinical barrier to workforce stability and rural access to care.

SPH will hire a dedicated, 12-month Housing Coordinator responsible for securing, managing, and optimizing workforce housing inventory across Homer for temporary and relocating staff. Currently, these duties are split somewhat haphazardly between a fulltime Senior Recruiter in the Human Resources Department and a fulltime Executive Assistant in the Administration Department. As the need for housing coordination and

management have grown, the demands of this work have exceeded the ability of these two positions to address them above and beyond their other duties. Hiring a dedicated Housing Coordinator will streamline these functions and position SPH for continued successful recruitment and retention of a strong workforce now and into the future.

SPH will recruit a candidate with strong interpersonal skills, attention to detail, and commitment to serving the SPH mission. Core responsibilities of the new position will include:

Housing Acquisition & Partnerships

1. Develop and maintain relationships with local property owners
2. Negotiate rental agreements
3. Build an inventory of flexible housing options

Property Management Functions for SPH-dedicated housing and general housing units

1. Manage check-in/out processes, cleaning, and turnover
2. Address maintenance issues
3. Serve as primary liaison between SPH and property owners
4. Manage key hand-offs and documentation

Establish Systems to Streamline Housing Coordination

1. Establish property management and coordination systems to support efficient housing coordination into the future as SPH scales up its workforce.

Project Concept Preliminary Outcomes*

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

Within 6–12 months:

1. Reduced onboarding time for new employees
2. Increased acceptance rate of job offers
3. Reduced vacancy duration for critical clinical roles
4. Improved housing stability for traveling clinicians
5. Reduction in last-minute staffing disruptions
6. Production of a healthcare workforce coordination system to streamline process going forward

Within 12–24 months:

1. Decreased reliance on high-cost locum tenens staffing
2. Improved provider retention rates
3. Increased consistency in specialty and ancillary services
4. Stabilized clinical scheduling and reduced appointment cancellations

Longer-term (24–36 months):

1. Improved financial performance through reduced contract labor costs
2. Enhanced workforce satisfaction and satisfaction of workforce integration into community
3. Increased patient access and continuity of care

By removing a key non-clinical barrier to recruitment, SPH expects measurable improvement in access to care for seniors, chronic disease patients, and individuals requiring specialty services on the Kenai Peninsula.

Project Concept Sustainability*

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

AHHA's 2025 Healthcare Workforce Analysis finds that the current supply of healthcare workers in Alaska is insufficient to meet demand. Sustainability of care at SPH depends on our ability to remove barriers to hiring and swift onboarding of a strong and stable workforce.

Hiring a full-time, 12-month Housing Coordinator to help develop a healthcare workforce coordination system for rental units will help streamline processes and set up protocols that can be used to make these functions more efficient going forward. This individual will help reduce position vacancy periods, which result in increased contract wages and lost revenue and care capacity in the case of physician vacancies. It is important in an area with limited housing availability that staff are given temporary housing to have time to find stable long-term housing. Without this transition period, they may otherwise have to decline offers. Lost physician revenue for a 90-day vacancy period in the primary care setting alone can easily total \$108,000 assuming 12 visits a day at \$150 reimbursement (very conservative).

Project Concept Key Risks or Uncertainties*

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

A key risk for any project in rural Alaska that is contingent on the hiring of new staff is the challenge to recruit and retain qualified individuals. These challenges are compounded by the challenge at the center of this project—shortage of affordable local housing. But SPH has a strong HR recruitment team and existing hiring channels that have a track record of success. In addition, SPH offers a \$1,000 employee referral bonus, which supports effective recruitment, and a generous benefits package to make job offers more competitive.

Additional uncertainties embedded in this project are the inherent uncertainties with local housing, including: potential construction delay on SPH-dedicated housing, limited local housing inventory, seasonal tourism demand reducing availability, property owner withdrawal from agreements, and fluctuating workforce demand. These are the very challenges the new Housing Coordinator position will address. To mitigate these risks, the Housing Coordinator will develop a diversified housing portfolio across multiple property types, negotiate year-round agreements with key landlords as needed, maintain contingency hotel partnerships as needed, build flexible short-term lease structures, and monitor occupancy and demand trends quarterly.

By centralizing housing management, SPH reduces risk compared to decentralized arrangements currently handled across multiple departments.

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
Strengthen Workforce

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).

Workforce

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.

This is a temporary, 12-month position to bridge SPH's housing coordination into the new 25-unit development and to create an enduring process for housing coordination moving forward.

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?

\$50,000-\$250,000

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

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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