

1. **Question:** What is the purpose of the Health Professional Loan Repayment and Scholarship program?

Answer:

The program encourages licensed health professionals to provide primary care health care at approved sites in rural or underserved areas in Washington State. The program provides financial support in the form of loan repayment or conditional scholarship.

There are three funding categories:

1. The Federal-State Loan Repayment Program (FSLRP), which uses matching federal grant funds for the two-year contract.
2. The Health Professional Loan Repayment Program (HPLRP), which uses state funds for a minimum three-year contract.
3. For 2017-19, a conditional scholarship targeted to nurse educators.

2. **Question:** What are the goals of the program?

Answer:

- Increase the supply of an appropriate mix of health care professionals to meet the needs of rural and underserved urban communities.
- Reduce barriers to accessing primary care by assisting communities that are underserved, or at risk of becoming so, to attract and retain needed health care professionals dedicated to serving in their population.
- Maintain enough flexibility to recognize variables such as funding levels, education debt, tuition costs, current program participants, and applicant pool.

3. **Question:** What are the benefits to participants?

Answer:

The loan repayment program reduces educational debt. It allows health care professionals with an interest in serving rural and underserved communities to work at sites where pay may be less competitive than at large, urban sites or specialty clinics.

The conditional scholarship program supports students whose educational goals include a becoming nurse educator/faculty member.

4. **Question:** What are the benefits to the state?

Answer: The program encourages health care professionals to serve in Washington's most medically underserved urban and rural communities, reducing barriers that many in those areas experience in accessing primary care health services.

In 2016 approximately 100 health professionals worked in underserved areas of Washington as a result of this program. Since 1990, the program has funded over 1,000 professionals serving in 38 Washington counties.

5. **Question:** What are some of the program's challenges and emerging issues?

Answer:

- The state is facing a primary health care provider shortage. HPLRP provides incentives for medical students in Washington to go into primary care medicine instead of specialty medicine.
- Contributing to this shortage is an aging medical workforce. According to a recent study conducted by the University of Washington's Center for Health Workforce Studies, 70 percent of physicians in Washington are 56 or older.
- Washington's population is 24 percent rural, and rural populations face additional barriers in accessing health care. According to an estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, 15 percent of rural Washingtonians are elderly, and 38 percent are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- The number of rural primary care physicians per capita will decrease by approximately 3.66 per 100,000 by 2025—a 7 percent reduction from 2013 levels.
- Urban areas of Washington State will experience a reduction of 4.14 primary care physicians per 100,000—a 5 percent reduction from 2013 levels.
- These estimated declines are driven largely by recent increases in the percentage of primary care physicians age 55 and older, many of whom are likely to retire by 2025.[§]

[§] Friedberg, Mark W., Grant R. Martsof, Chapin White, David I. Auerbach, Ryan Kandrack, Rachel O. Reid, Emily Butcher, Hao Yu, Simon Hollands and Xiaoyu Nie. Evaluation of Policy Options for Increasing the Availability of Primary Care Services in Rural Washington State. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016.

6. **Question:** How many awards are made and to whom?

2010–16 TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDING AND AWARDS

	State Legislative Allocations	Federal/ State Loan Repayment Funds	Total* Applications	Scholarship Awards	Loan Repayment Awards	Total Awards
2010-11	\$530,000	\$525,000	116	6	38	44
2011-12	\$530,000	\$525,000	25	0	14	14
2012-13	\$530,000	\$525,000	31	0	24	24
2013-14	\$525,000	\$525,000	103	0	25	25
2014-15	\$525,000	\$498,225	113	0	14	14
2015-16	\$525,000	\$525,000	112	0	19	19
2016-17	\$5,210,000	\$525,000	215	0	100	100

2010–11 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

	Total* Applications	Awarded								Total Awards
		MD	DO	PA	NP	RN	RX	DDS	Other	
2010-11	46	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	6

2010–16 LOAN REPAYMENT AWARDS

	Total* Applications	Awarded								Total Awards
		MD	DO	PA	NP	RN	RX	DDS	Other	
2010-11	70	2	0	6	2	5	10	6	7	38
2011-12	25	5	3	2	3	0	0	1	0	14
2012-13	31	10	2	2	4	0	0	4	2	24
2013-14	103	7	0	2	5	6	2	3	0	25
2014-15	113	4	0	3	1	2	2	1	0	14
2015-16	112	4	0	1	4	4	2	3	1	19
2016-17	215	19	5	17	16	11	14	9	9	100

* Includes applicants later found ineligible, or who declined the award or failed to submit required documentation.