

## STATE-LEVEL SITE VISIT GUIDE

### Research Questions

The state-level site visits protocol instrument will be used to guide interviews with the lead agency and relevant stakeholders. Through interviews and document analysis, we hope to obtain information on the following topics:

1. The history of state policy and planning on rural health and hospital issues;
2. The state's goals in the Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (RHFP);
3. The state's plans and priorities for using RHFP grant funds;
4. The role of the state and other key stakeholders in planning and implementation of RHFP;
5. RHFP implementation successes and problems, including the capacities of key players, federal-state-local policy and program coordination, the nature and degree of stakeholder involvement in the planning process and the degree of stakeholder agreement with the goals of the state's RHFP, regulatory issues, and local implementation; and
6. Key lessons learned.

The following elaborates our focus in each of these areas.

**I. The History of State Policy and Planning on Rural Health and Hospital Issues** – This section of the protocol focuses on the extent and the nature of state-level planning and policy development prior to the passage and implementation of the RHFP. Some of the questions we want to address here are:

- How does the extent of prior rural health policy and planning activity in a state (either state government or in the state hospital association) affect the level, nature, and success of policy development and planning activity under the RHFP?
- What factors account for the degree of state-level policy development and planning on rural health issues?
- To what extent is the RHFP consistent in purpose and approach with prior state-level policy development and planning efforts?
  - Goals
  - Stakeholder participants
  - Planning focus, priorities, and strategies

**II. The State's Goals in the Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (RHFP)** – How states approach the development and implementation of the RHFP will depend on how they see the program fitting their goals and priorities. In addition, success in this effort will depend on the degree of goal congruence among key stakeholders, including the SORH, hospital association, other state agencies, legislature etc. Hence, the thrust of this section is to obtain information that will help us assess the fit between the goals of the RHFP legislation/program, state government, and key stakeholders.

- How well does the RHFP fit with states' rural health policy and planning priorities?
- To what extent have states molded the RHFP to their needs and priorities and how has this affected achievement of the goals of the RHFP?
- To what extent has the RHFP changed state goals and priorities and with what effects?

**III. The State's Plans and Priorities for Using RHFP Grant Funds** – How states develop and use health plans varies considerably. The focus of this section is on the “planning orientation” of the state agencies responsible for the RHFP and the collaborating stakeholders.

- ❑ What is the scope of the state's rural health plan?
- ❑ To what extent does the plan focus on “hospital conversions” versus “rural health infrastructure development”
- ❑ How has the state used RHFP grant funds? To what extent have these been directed to sites and/or to enhancing state capacity? How have the sites benefited in the case of the latter?

**IV. The Role of the State and Other Key Stakeholders in the Planning and Implementation of the RHFP** – The purposes of this section are (1) to obtain information that will enable us to characterize the role(s) that states have played in the development and implementation of the RHFP, and (2) to assess the roles that key stakeholders, like the hospital association, have played in the planning and implementation of the RHFP.

- ❑ What roles have states played in facilitating the regulatory framework/process, providing grant funds to sites, providing technical assistance etc.? Which has been a priority and why?
- ❑ How has state rural health capacity affected the development and implementation of the RHFP?
- ❑ What roles have other stakeholders played?
- ❑ How do variations in state roles and capacity affect implementation and success of the program?

**V. RHFP Implementation Successes, Problems, and Lessons Learned** – Here we are seeking information about program development and implementation approaches, the successes and problems that states have faced, and the degree of generalizability among states.

- ❑ How common or idiosyncratic are the development and implementation barriers and problems that states have faced?
- ❑ What factors have contributed to these barriers/problems?
- ❑ What are the most successful features of the states' development and/or implementation approaches/strategies? To what extent is it generalizable?
- ❑ What accounts for this success?

**VI. RHFP Evaluation Plans** – the questions in this section seek information on the states' plans for evaluating the RHFP, what they hope to learn from that evaluation, and the approaches and measures they propose to use.

- ❑ Are states planning to undertake evaluations of the RHFP?
- ❑ What approaches are they planning to use?
- ❑ What are they most concerned with learning from these evaluations?