

# RURAL HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE TRENDS

## THE METHOD

The 2024 Workforce Environmental Scan data were explored by five Colorado rural regions to better understand the variance in recruitment and retention needs across rural areas. For the purpose of this analysis, respondents who didn't provide a county or region were excluded from region specific analyses. Areas of healthcare workforce recruitment and retention explored included demographics, benefits, hiring processes, recruitment and retention strategies, and rural practice rewards and challenges.

## 48 TOTAL RESPONDENTS

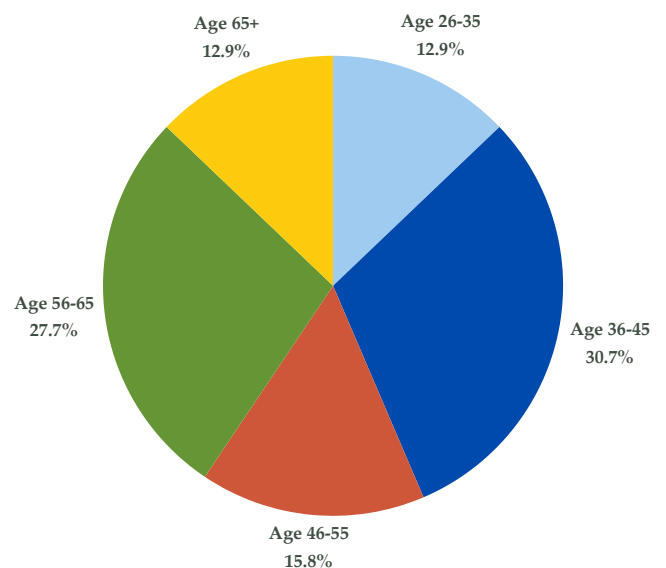
### Respondent Breakdown by Region



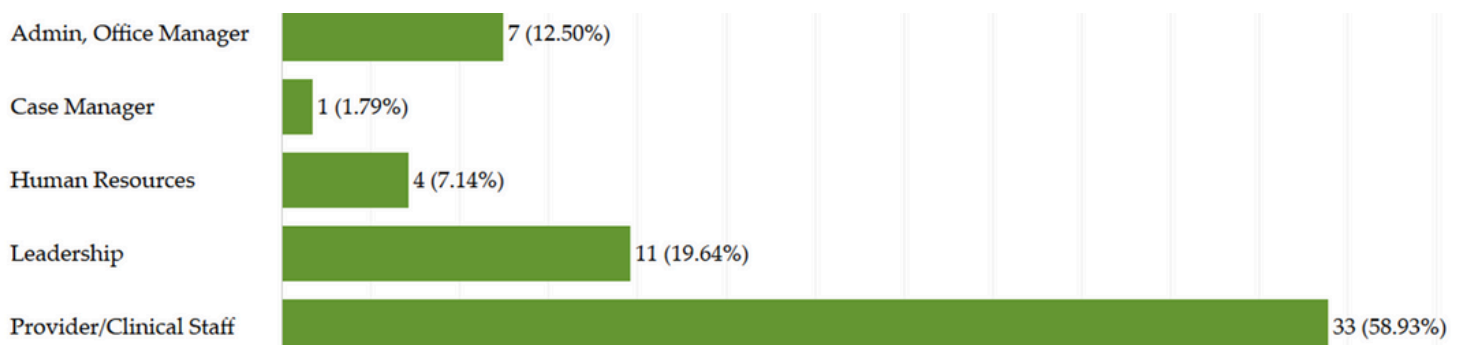
Identified as heterosexual



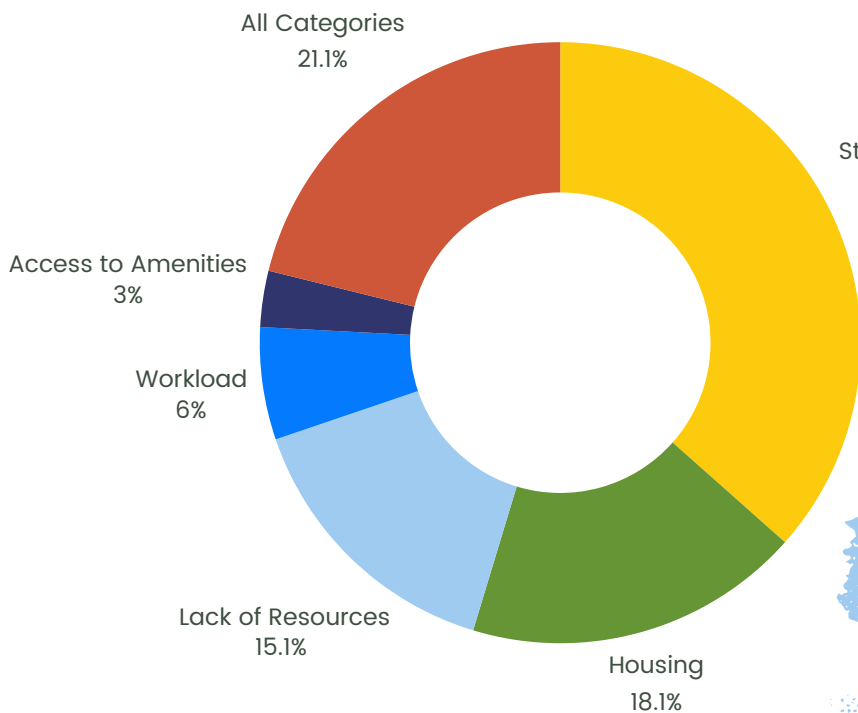
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### Employee Title and Position



# ACROSS ALL REGIONS



## Most Challenging Part of Working in Rural

Staffing Shortages  
36.6%



The majority (84%) of respondents felt their organization understood employee needs and dissatisfactions enough to make changes.

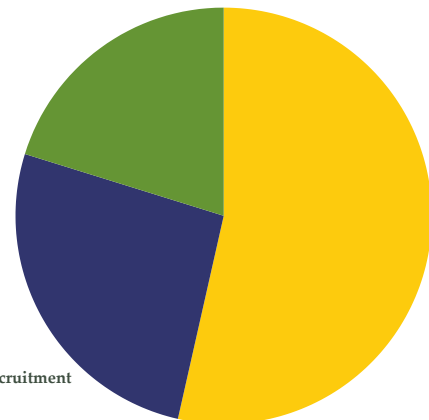
Over 1/3 (38%) of respondents felt the salary and benefits didn't meet the needs of employees.

When asked what the most important factor was in recruitment and retention of staff and providers:



Over 90% of the workforce felt their office offered a scope of practice and services providers are interested in providing patients.

Having recruitment be a community initiative  
20.2%



Dedicated staff focused on recruitment  
26.3%

Leadership involvement  
53.5%

# WORK ENVIRONMENT

## TRAINING BREAKDOWN

Mental Health/Stress Continuum Training  
30.4%

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
26.8%

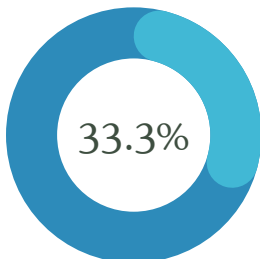
Gender Affirming Care  
17.9%

Cultural Sensitivity Training  
25%

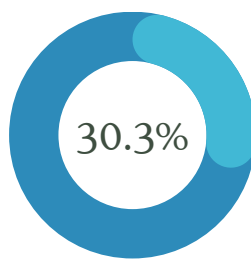
82% agreed their workplace prioritized recruiting and retaining diversity.

Over 90% of workforce felt their office offered a scope of practice and services providers are interested in providing patients

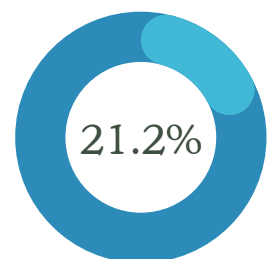
## WHEN ASKED WHAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN RETENTION OF WORKFORCE THE TOP THREE THEMES WERE:



CULTURE/WORK ENVIRONMENT



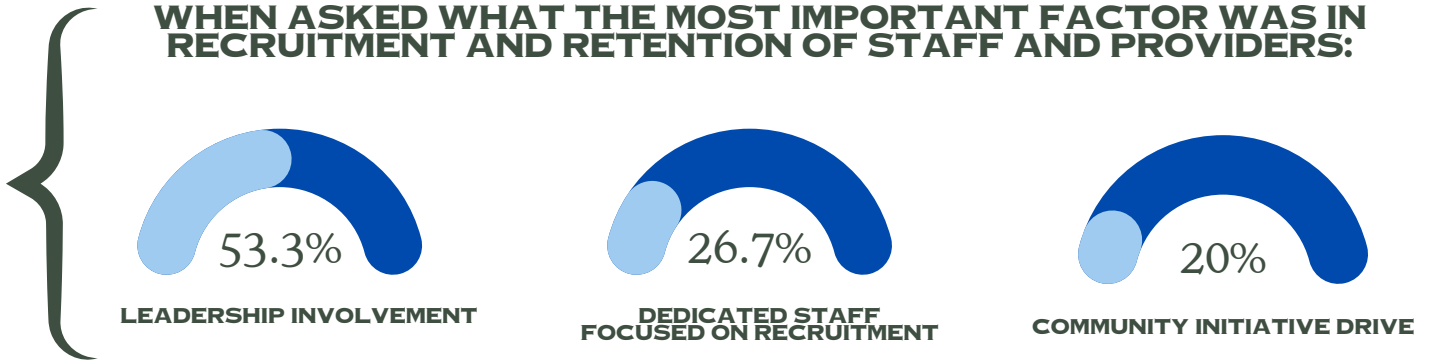
COMPENSATION & HEALTH BENEFITS



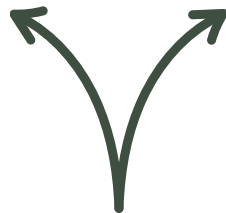
COMMUNITY FACTORS

# RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

WHEN ASKED WHAT THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR WAS IN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STAFF AND PROVIDERS:



IN TERMS OF HIRING PRACTICES:

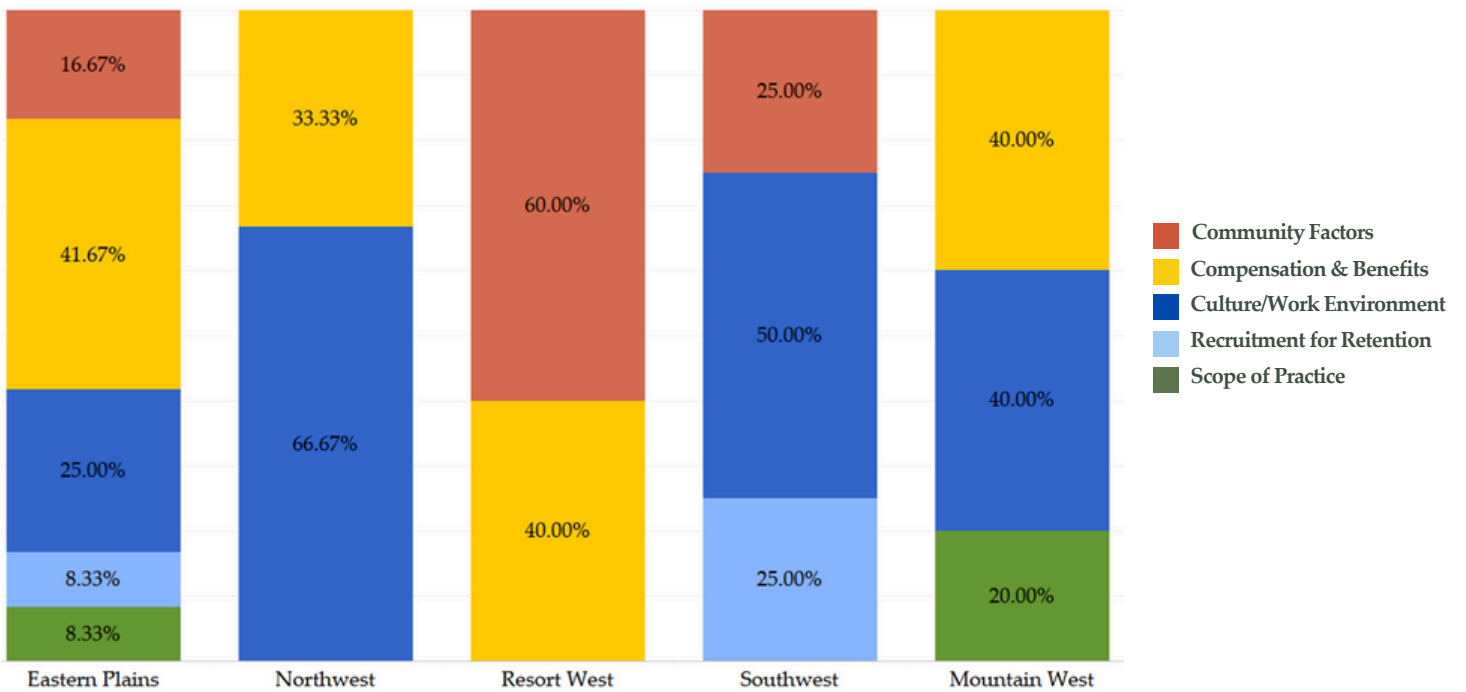


WERE THE TOP TWO ONBOARDING PROCESSES PRIORITIZED FOR NEW EMPLOYEES.

# REGIONAL COMPARISONS

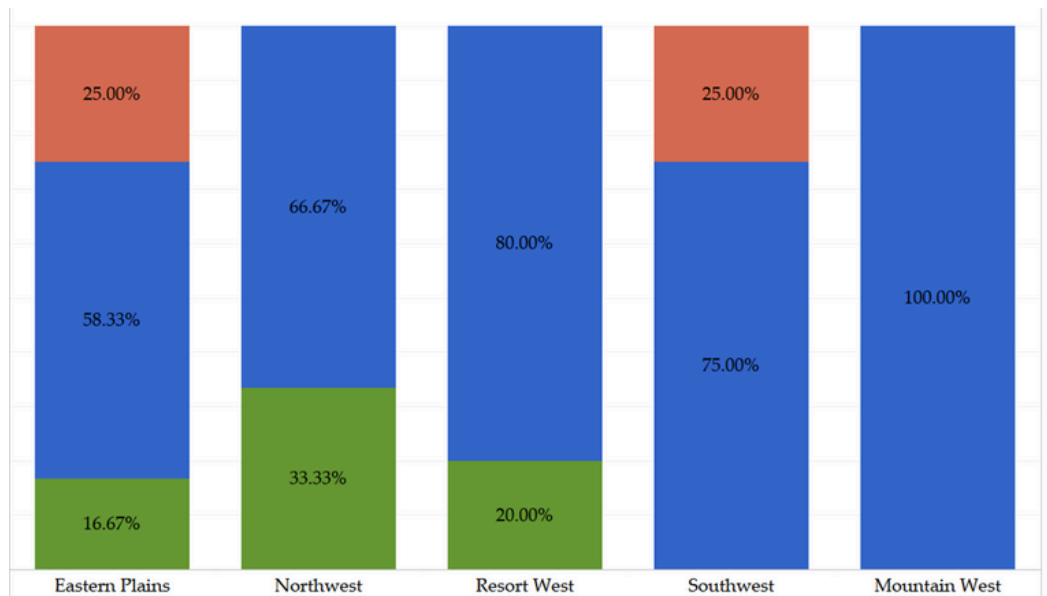
The top three considerations viewed as most important in retention of workforce are:

- Culture/Work Environment
- Compensation and Benefits, and
- Community Factors



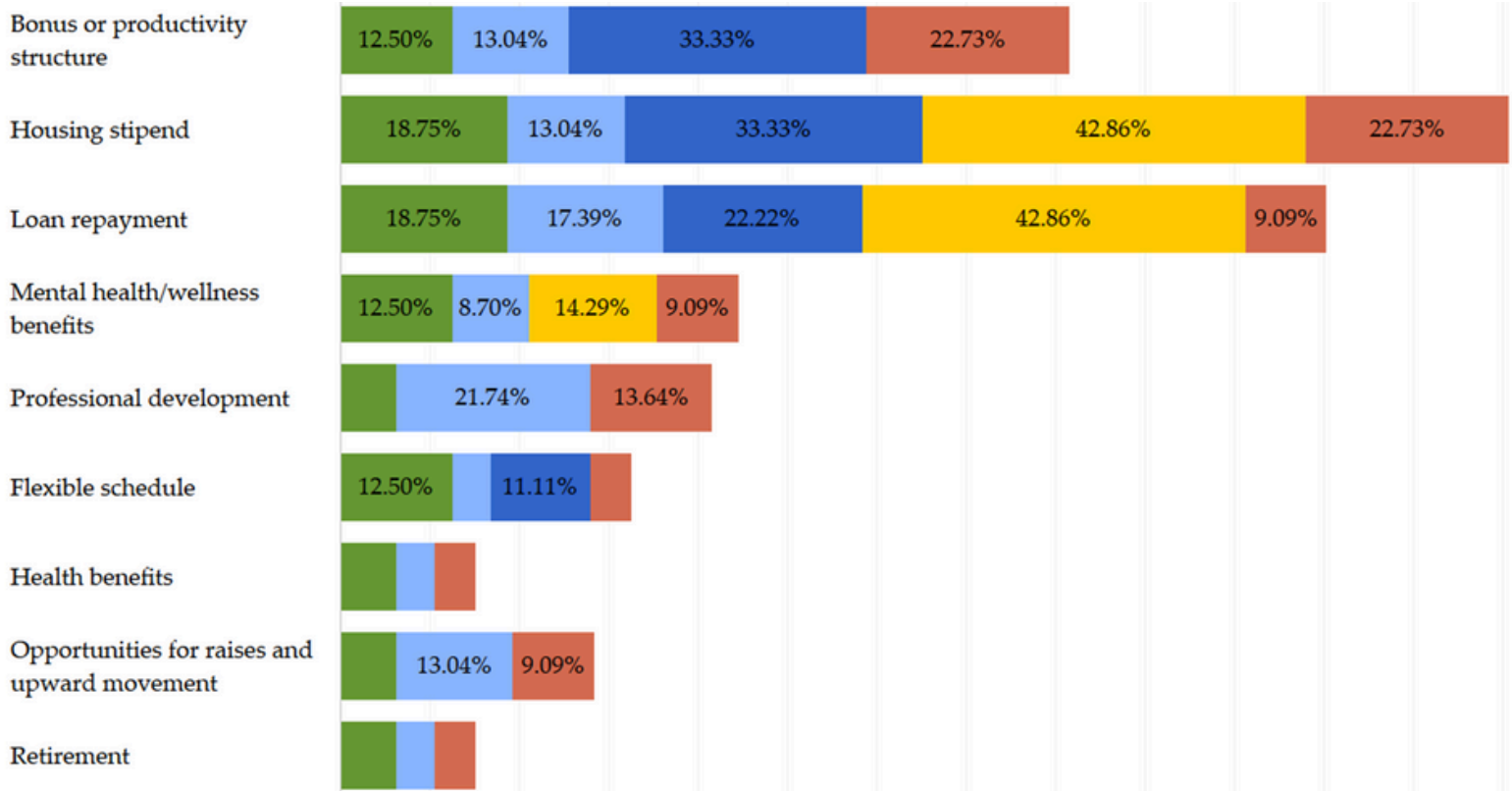
Majority of facilities believe their organization understands employee needs enough to make changes

- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree



# REGIONAL COMPARISONS

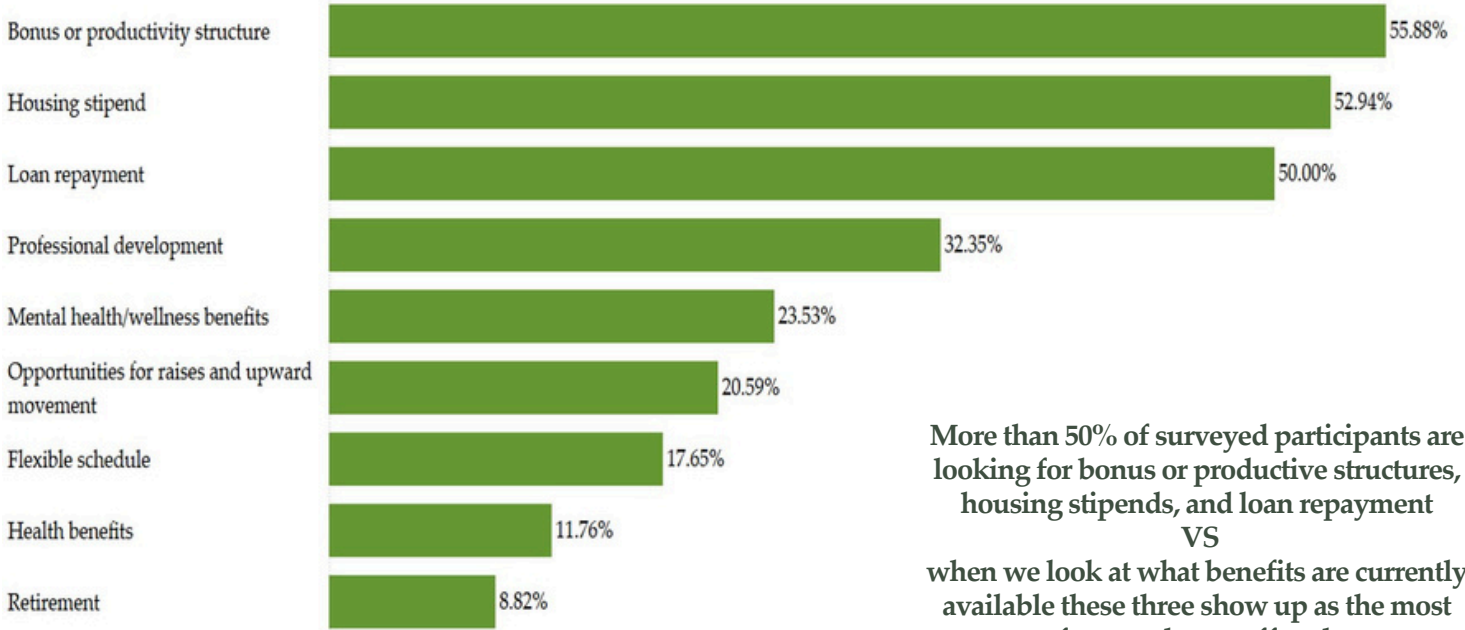
Among benefits not offered within facilities the top three benefits identified that would help retain staff were bonus or productivity structure (20%), housing stipend (20%) and loan repayment (18%).



- Eastern Plains
- Northwest
- Resort West
- Southwest
- Mountain West

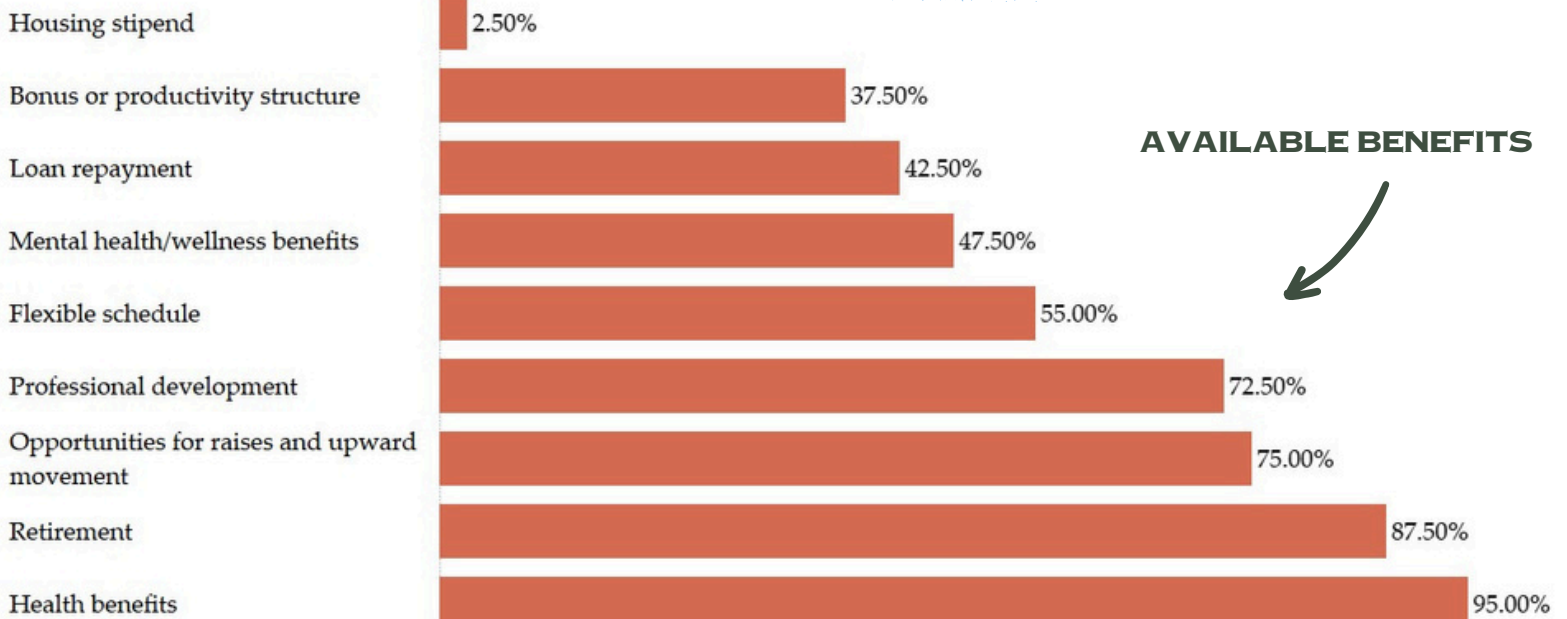
# REGIONAL COMPARISONS

## SOUGHT AFTER BENEFITS



More than 50% of surveyed participants are looking for bonus or productive structures, housing stipends, and loan repayment VS when we look at what benefits are currently available these three show up as the most frequently not offered.

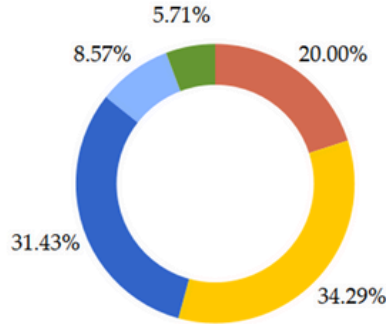
Eastern plains was the only region to respond as having a housing stipend in place.



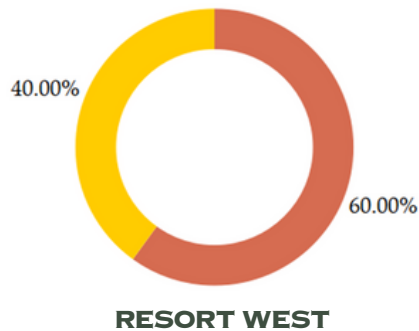
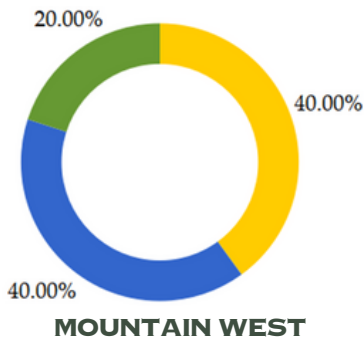
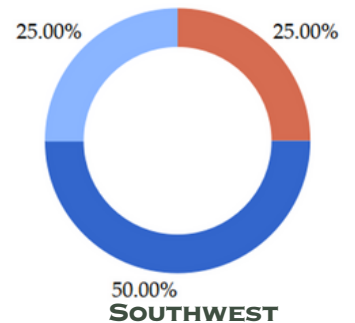
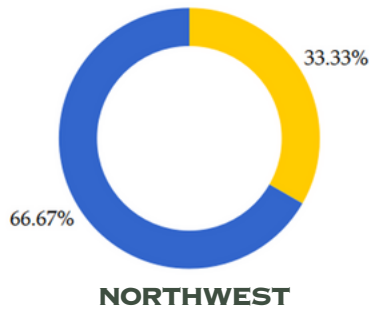
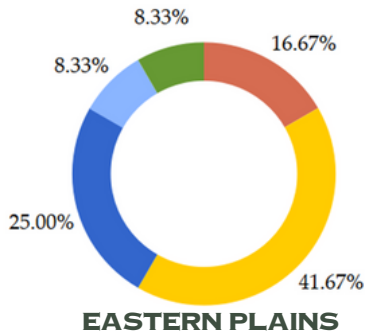
## AVAILABLE BENEFITS

# REGIONAL COMPARISONS

The top 3 considerations viewed as most important in retention of workforce overall are culture/work environment, compensation and benefits, and scope of practice.



- Community Factors
- Compensation & Benefits
- Culture/Work Environment
- Recruitment for Retention
- Scope of Practice





# Colorado Rural Health Center RETENTION STRATEGY

## MOUNTAIN WEST



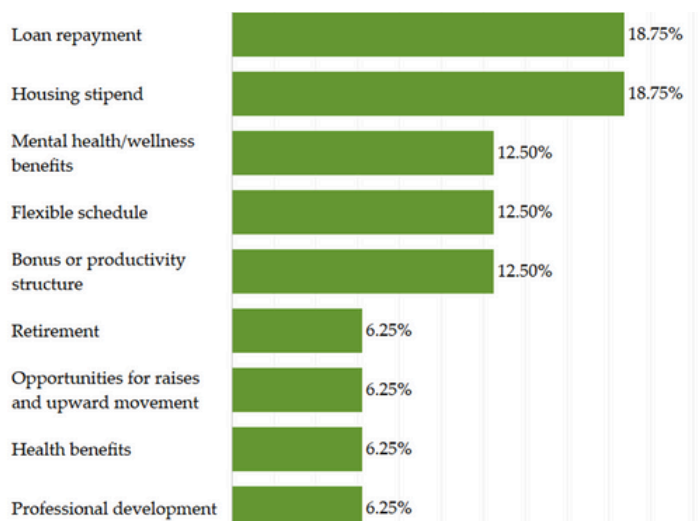
### BEST PRACTICES

**Initiate an Employee Engagement Questionnaire.** For Employee Engagement Survey's conducted more than once a year, consider using a smaller set of questions which can result in timely feedback. Questions to consider:

- I am satisfied with my job
- I am satisfied with my workload
- I am challenged in my current position
- I am given the tools to succeed
- I am satisfied with the amount of feedback from my supervisor
- I have a say in my current position
- Overall, I like the direction that XX company is going towards

**Onboarding through an equity lens.** Equity being defined as the quality of being fair and impartial offers various ways you can encourage diverse recruitment and retention plans.

- Conscious accommodations or ethics celebrations
- Providing materials from the job posting to onboarding and training, in multiple languages (verbal and written)
- Informing employees of resource groups that provide additional support
- Implement regular and robust Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training



AMONG BENEFITS NOT OFFERED WITH IN THIS REGION FACILITIES, THE TOP BENEFITS IDENTIFIED THAT WOULD HELP RETAIN STAFF WERE LOAN REPAYMENT AND HOUSING STIPEND.

### REGIONAL TAKEAWAYS:

- HOUSING (40%) AND A LACK OF RESOURCES (40%) AS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- 40% REPORTED CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY AS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- 20% REPORTED THEIR WORKPLACE DOES NOT PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY IN THEIR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN
- SCOPE OF PRACTICE (20%) WAS IDENTIFIED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN RETENTION OF THE WORKFORCE



# Colorado Rural Health Center RETENTION STRATEGY

## RESORT WEST



### BEST PRACTICES

**We Asked, They Answered.** In a 2023-24 environmental scan conducted by CRHC, of current NP, PA and MD/DO students and residents had the following to say regarding recruitment:

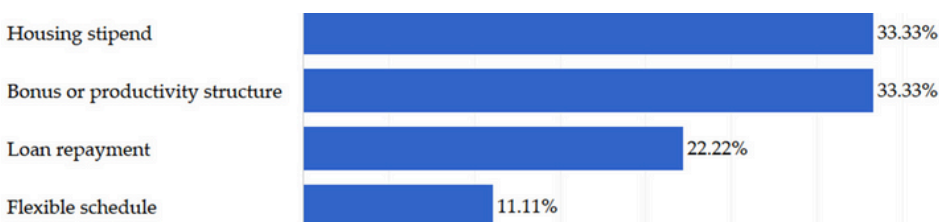
- Students and Residents indicated they preferred email for their initial contact
- When given the choice between virtual, in-person and in-person with a clinic tour, those surveyed preferred a virtual first interview
- In terms of a second interview, the preference was for an in-person interview with a clinic tour
- Top benefits they are looking for included loan repayment and professional development

**High School Engagement and Growing Your Own.** Engagement with high school students has shown to be impactful for growing the healthcare field. Consider having residents, interns, or established providers host an interactive and educational session with the local schools. Programs to look at:

- SWCAHEC Health Careers Institute
- COAHEC Anatomy and Discourse on Arts, Values, Ethics, and Respect in Science (C.A.D.A.V.E.R.S.)
- The H.O.P.E. Institute (University of Colorado)
- Operation Orange, Pre-Health Round Up, Dr. Pete's Immersion Camp, The Blue Coat to White Coat Program (Oklahoma State University)

#### Connect with Your Area Health Education Center

- Assistance with housing during clinical rotations
- Brainstorming on how to build an in-house training program
- Offer health based certifications and culturally sensitive trainings



AMONG BENEFITS NOT OFFERED WITHIN THIS REGION FACILITIES, THE TOP BENEFITS IDENTIFIED THAT WOULD HELP RETAIN STAFF WERE HOUSING STIPEND AND BONUS OR PRODUCTIVITY STRUCTURE.

### REGIONAL TAKEAWAYS:

- 40% OF RESPONDENTS STATED STAFFING SHORTAGES AS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART IN RURAL PRACTICE
- 100% OF PARTICIPANTS STATED CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY AS BEING THE MOST REWARDING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- HAVING RECRUITMENT BE A COMMUNITY INITIATIVE WAS THE HIGHEST FACTOR IN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STAFF AND PROVIDERS FOR THIS REGION
- IN TERMS OF HIRING PRACTICES, THIS WAS THE ONLY REGION FOCUSED ON FEELING OF BELONGING (20%)



# Colorado Rural Health Center RETENTION STRATEGY

## EASTERN PLAINS



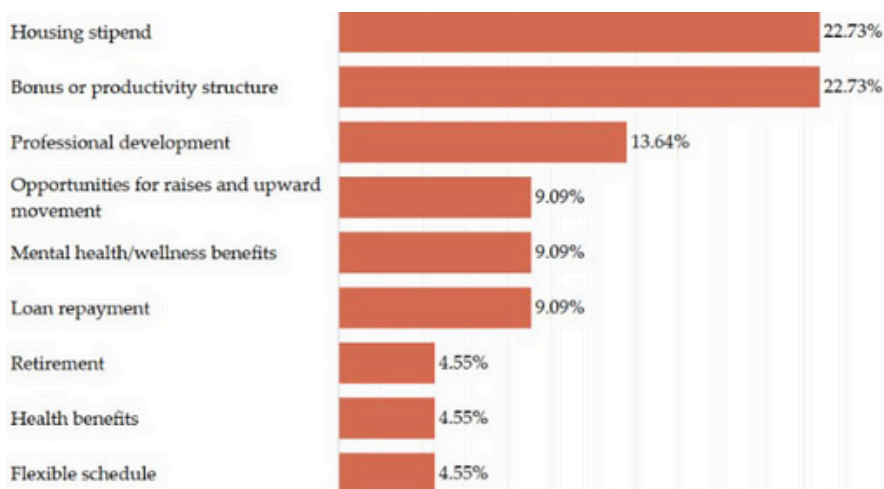
### BEST PRACTICES

**Gain a better understanding of employee needs and engagement.** For a deeper understanding of your company culture and employee engagement, consider covering topics via feedback/short answer questions. Questions or topic areas to consider:

- People are held accountable for the quality of work they produce
- I am encouraged to learn from my mistakes
- I received the training I need to do my job well
- The pace of the work in this organization enables me to do a good job
- I am paid fairly for the work I do

**Supplement with Telemedicine or other private medical groups.** Telemedicine can help support gaps in coverage, patient consultations with specialists, provider-to-provider questions.

- My Virtual Physician
- Rural Family Physicians (Dr. Dan Wandsneider)
- Colorado Pediatric Psychiatry Consultation & Access Program
- IMatter



AMONG BENEFITS NOT OFFERED WITH IN THIS REGION FACILITIES, THE TOP BENEFITS IDENTIFIED THAT WOULD HELP RETAIN STAFF WERE HOUSING STIPEND AND BONUS OR PRODUCTIVITY STRUCTURE.

### REGIONAL TAKEAWAYS:

- 42% REPORTED STAFFING SHORTAGES AS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- 75% REPORTED THE CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY AS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- RESPONDENTS IN THIS REGION (20%) REPORTED DISAGREEING OR STRONGLY DISAGREEING WITH THEIR SCOPE OF PRACTICE. MENTAL HEALTH WAS REPORTED AS THE BIGGEST MISSING SPECIALTY SERVICE
- 25% REPORTED DISAGREEING WITH THEIR ORGANIZATION IN UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE NEEDS ENOUGH TO MAKE CHANGES
- IN TERMS OF HIRING PRACTICES. 27% SAID A COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO PERTINENT INFORMATION BEING PRIORITIZED WAS THE TOP FACTOR

# Colorado Rural Health Center RETENTION STRATEGY

## NORTHWEST



### BEST PRACTICES

CONSIDERATIONS TO OFF-SET THE COST OF HOUSING IF A SPECIFIC HOUSING STIPEND IS UNAVAILABLE.

#### Loan Repayment Options:

- Hospital or clinic based (consider what this might look like in terms of a partnership with a nearby practice)
- National Health Service Corps, NHSC Substance Use Disorder Workforce, NHSC- Rural Community, Nurse Corps, Colorado Health Service Corps, Independent state programs, Public Service Loan Forgiveness

#### Utilize Grant Funding:

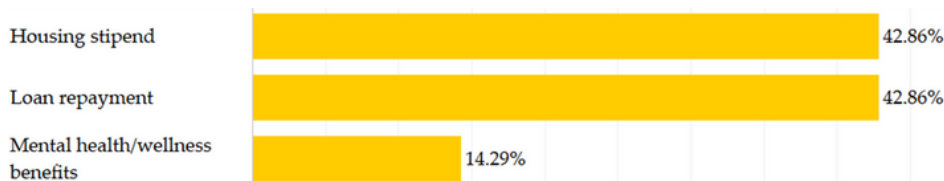
Utilize grant funding to supplement salaries for specialty positions (mental health), upgrade equipment and other capital investment opportunities, health equity programs, general primary care needs, housing solutions, telehealth expansion, etc.

- Colorado Academy of Family Physicians, The Colorado Health Foundation, The Denver Foundation, The Colorado Trust, Rocky Mountain Health Foundation, The Telligen Community Initiative, Kaiser Permanente, Community Health Grantmaking, EL Pomar Foundation, USDA, HRSA

#### Hire Military Veterans:

Military veterans will have potentially served in geographically isolated areas meaning rural will not be surprising to them. Many times they do not have student loans and can receive housing assistance through VA programs.

- [dol.gov](http://dol.gov) offers a veteran specific job board as well as an employer guide outlining how to best recruit and retain veterans
- [hirecoloradovet.gov](http://hirecoloradovet.gov) offers a veteran specific job board
- [va.gov/vetsinworkplace](http://va.gov/vetsinworkplace) provides an employer toolkit as well as information on job boards and career fairs



AMONG BENEFITS NOT OFFERED WITH IN THIS REGION FACILITIES, THE TOP BENEFITS IDENTIFIED THAT WOULD HELP RETAIN STAFF WERE HOUSING STIPEND AND LOAN REPAYMENT.

### REGIONAL TAKEAWAYS:

- 100% REPORTED CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY AS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- 38% REPORTED “ALL OF THE ABOVE” WHICH INCLUDED HOUSING, LACK OF RESOURCES, STAFFING SHORTAGES AS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- IN TERMS OF HIRING PRACTICES, 33% SAID COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO PERTINENT INFORMATION BEING PRIORITIZED WAS THE TOP FACTOR
- 43% RANKED A HOUSING STIPEND AS THE BENEFIT NOT CURRENTLY OFFERED BUT THAT WOULD HELP RETAIN STAFF, MORE THAN ANY OTHER REGION.



# Colorado Rural Health Center RETENTION STRATEGY

## SOUTHWEST

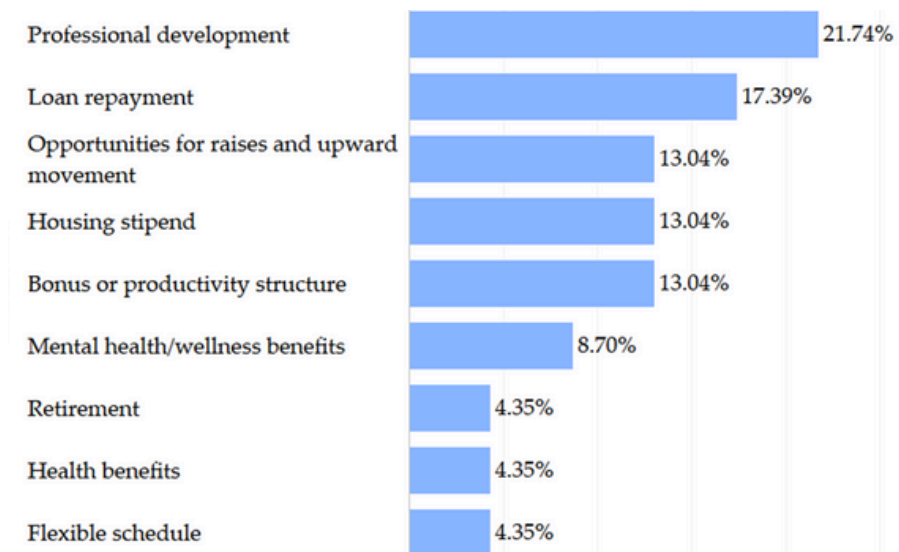


### BEST PRACTICES

**Hospital or Clinic Sponsored CME.** CME is required for some licensure renewals. As medicine changes, providers need to stay up to date with trends and evidenced based procedures and best practices. Offering a flexible and adequate CME package can aid in the desire for professional development in this region. Packages might include:

- Specific CME time-off to attend the training/event
- CME allowance
- CME travel reimbursement/ per diem
- Host associations for on-site CME (or bring the training to the provider)
- On-demand or virtual CME options

**Understand your community's demographic/ patient mix.** While this might change naturally over a long period of time, your current demographic/patient mix is likely the people your providers will be serving for the foreseeable future. If you can understand their unique needs (SUD, OB, geriatrics), you can better understand the type of provider you are recruiting and really market to that niche group of providers.



AMONG BENEFITS NOT OFFERED WITH IN THIS REGION FACILITIES, THE TOP BENEFITS IDENTIFIED THAT WOULD HELP RETAIN STAFF WERE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOAN REPAYMENT.

### REGIONAL TAKEAWAYS:

- 67% REPORTED “ALL OF THE ABOVE” WHICH INCLUDED HOUSING, LACK OF RESOURCES, STAFFING SHORTAGES AS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF RURAL PRACTICE
- THE IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY WAS REPORTED AS THE MOST REWARDING PART (50%) WHICH STANDS ALONE COMPARED TO THE OTHER REGIONS
- 25% OF RESPONDENTS SAID RECRUITMENT FOR RETENTION WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN THE RETENTION OF WORKFORCE
- 25% SAID THEIR ORGANIZATION DIDN'T UNDERSTAND EMPLOYEE NEEDS OR DISSATISFACTIONS ENOUGH TO MAKE CHANGES

The complete data analysis of the 2024 Rural Healthcare Environmental Scan including results from the 2024 Health Profession Student and Resident Environmental Scan can be found on on the CRHC website.

# COLORADO RURAL HEALTH CENTER

The Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) is Colorado’s nonprofit State Office of Rural Health. CRHC works with federal, state, and local partners to offer services and resources to rural healthcare providers, facilities and communities. We have a diverse and inclusive statewide constituency serving organizations in every corner of the state.

Established in 1991 by members of the Colorado Rural Health Consortium, Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) was created with start-up support from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and several other public and private organizations around the state. CRHC was developed as a nonprofit organization and is one of only three nonprofit offices of rural health in the country.

## CRHC CONTACT



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*The State Office of Rural Health*

