Alaska Rural Health Transformation Program

Fall 2026 Application Cycle: Summary of Changes to the Project Evaluation and Portfolio Analysis Frameworks

This document accompanies three framework documents released for public comment for the Fall 2026 Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) funding round:

- Project Application Evaluation Framework – Implementation Pathway
- Project Application Evaluation Framework – Planning Pathway
- Portfolio Analysis Review Framework

It summarizes the key changes from the prior frameworks and why they are being proposed. Applicants and other interested parties should review the full framework documents for the complete evaluation criteria, scoring descriptions, and portfolio review process.

Summary

The proposed changes reflect lessons from the first RHTP funding round, along with preliminary feedback from applicants, partner organizations, and the Rural Health Transformation Program Advisory Council. They are intended to make the evaluation process clearer, keep project-level review focused on the quality and merit of each proposal, and better account for how projects are designed and implemented in rural Alaska.

The proposed frameworks include nine substantive changes:

Description of Changes

	Change	What is changing?	Why?
1	Create a separate evaluation framework for planning projects	Planning applications are now evaluated under their own framework. It uses the same nine criteria and weights as the implementation framework, with scoring descriptions adapted to the planning stage.	Planning and implementation projects are at different stages of development. A separate framework evaluates what strong planning should accomplish.
2	Clarify how applications are scored	The frameworks now explain how reviewer scores are combined into a final score.	Provides a clearer description of how applications are evaluated and how scores are calculated.

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3	Clarify how projects advance to portfolio review	The minimum of 3.0 now applies to the overall weighted score, with a minimum of 2.5 in each criterion. Previously, 3.0 was required in every criterion.	The overall threshold ensures each application meets the expected standard across all criteria, while the criterion minimum ensures a meaningful weakness in any one area is still considered.
4	Clarify how impermissible costs are considered during project evaluation	A discrete impermissible cost that can be removed without changing the project may be resolved through budget clarification rather than lowering the Alignment score. If the project's core purpose or a substantial portion of the proposed work is impermissible, that is reflected in the score.	A budget item that must be removed is different from a project that is not fundable. All proposed costs remain subject to review through budget clarification before an award is finalized.
5	Revise how coordination and partnerships are evaluated	Strength of Partnerships and Coordination is replaced by Community Alignment and Partnerships, at the same 10 percent weight. It considers engagement with other organizations and with the people the project will serve and support, and considers potential duplication more broadly.	Some projects require formal partnerships and others do not. The revised criterion lets applicants show coordination and community support in ways that fit the project and setting.
6	Add cost-effectiveness as an evaluation criterion	A new Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Justification criterion, weighted at 10 percent, evaluates whether the requested amount is reasonable for the work proposed within the performance period, in the context of the communities served.	Project budgets should be reasonable and appropriate for the work proposed. Adding a separate cost-effectiveness criterion makes that expectation explicit and allows reviewers to assess whether the amount requested is justified in relation to the project's scope, setting, and anticipated impact.
7	Clarify how portfolio review informs funding decisions	The portfolio framework describes where portfolio review fits in the funding process, who conducts it, and what follows it. Portfolio review does not change a project's score.	Project evaluation reviews for quality and merit to advance. Portfolio review then considers how projects with demonstrated merit fit together across the portfolio.

8	Expand the dimensions considered during portfolio review	Pathway and Department Focus Area are added as portfolio dimensions. The Department may set a target amount of funding for focus areas; focus area alignment does not change a project's evaluation score.	Both concern the overall mix of investments rather than the merit of an individual application.
9	Adjust the weighting of evaluation criteria	To accommodate the new criterion, Alignment decreases from 20 to 15 percent and Outcomes from 15 to 10 percent. All other weights are unchanged, and both pathways use the same weights.	The revised weighting maintains substantial emphasis on alignment while creating room to evaluate cost-effectiveness directly.