

## ACGME Rural Track Program Designation Frequently Asked Questions

Consistent with Section II of the ACGME framework for medically underserved areas and populations and GME (“MUA/P and GME”), the ACGME is developing processes addressing ACGME-accredited programs that are also “rural tracks” as defined in rules and regulations of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This guide is intended to answer frequently asked questions pertaining to the separately-accredited ACGME Rural Track Program designation. Additional information and resources can be found on the [MUA/P web page on the ACGME website](#). Click the desired question to navigate to the corresponding answer.

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Email additional questions about the ACGME Rural Track Program designation that are not answered in these FAQs to [muap@acgme.org](mailto:muap@acgme.org).

## ACGME RTP Background and Terms

<b>Question:</b>	<b>What is an ACGME Rural Track Program?</b>
Answer:	An ACGME Rural Track Program is defined as “An ACGME-accredited program with a unique 10-digit identifier in which residents/fellows gain both urban and rural experience with more than half of the education and training for each resident/fellow taking place in a rural area (any area outside of a Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA)).” Visit the <a href="#">ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page</a> to learn more.
<b>Question:</b>	<b>To which specialties and subspecialties does the ACGME Rural Track Program designation apply?</b>
Answer:	The ACGME Rural Track Program designation is not limited to specific specialties or subspecialties. Programs are encouraged to communicate with staff members of the relevant specialty Review Committee when planning to pursue ACGME Rural Track Program designation to learn about specialty-specific considerations. Their contact information may be found on the relevant <a href="#">specialty section of the ACGME website</a> .
<b>Question:</b>	<b>How will this process affect existing rural and rural track programs?</b>
Answer:	The ACGME Rural Track Program designation does not affect existing ACGME-accredited programs and is only available at the time of application for program accreditation.
<b>Question:</b>	<b>How does the ACGME Rural Track Program designation relate to CMS rural track policy?</b>
Answer:	The ACGME RTP designation aligns with rules and regulations of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that address separately-accredited “rural tracks” in <a href="#">42 CFR §413.79(k)</a> . The ACGME RTP designation is independent of any rural track designation by CMS and does not guarantee that a program will meet CMS eligibility requirements for GME or other financial support. If you have questions about the CMS rural track policy, contact your GME finance staff and/or the Prospective Payment System (PPS) hospital’s Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC).
<b>Question:</b>	<b>How will the designation process address changes to CMS rural track policy?</b>
Answer:	The ACGME will continue to review changes to relevant federal regulations as they are finalized and will update the designation process as applicable.

## ACGME RTP Designation Request Process and Criteria

<b>Question:</b>	<b>What is included in the ACGME RTP designation request?</b>
Answer:	The designation request is initiated in advance of a program accreditation application and requires program director information, program information (program details and participating site information), and a block diagram with an ACGME RTP Rotation Information Form. Review the ACGME RTP Designation Instructions document on the <a href="#">ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page</a> or email <a href="mailto:muap@acgme.org">muap@acgme.org</a> to learn more.
<b>Question:</b>	<b>How is a request for ACGME RTP designation related to a program’s accreditation application?</b>
Answer:	The designation request precedes a program accreditation application. When initiating a program accreditation application, the designated institutional official (DIO) is asked whether the program is seeking ACGME Rural Track Program designation. An affirmative DIO response prompts the program director to complete the ACGME RTP request prior to submitting the accreditation application. The ACGME’s MUA/P and GME staff review the designation information to determine whether the request meets designation criteria. The program director may complete sections of the program’s

	accreditation application while awaiting a response to an ACGME RTP designation request. ACGME RTP designation is contingent on the program's achievement of Initial Accreditation, following the accreditation process as set forth in the <i>ACGME Manual of Policies and Procedures</i> and in accordance with published specialty- or subspecialty-specific Program Requirements. Refer to the ACGME RTP Designation Request Instructions document on the <a href="#">ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page</a> for more information.
<b>Question:</b>	<b>Can an existing ACGME-accredited program apply for the ACGME RTP designation?</b>
Answer:	No. This designation is only available to programs submitting an application for Initial Accreditation. The ACGME will continue to review changes to relevant federal regulations as they are finalized and will update the designation process as applicable.
<b>Question:</b>	<b>What are the ACGME RTP designation criteria?</b>
Answer:	The criteria for ACGME RTP designation are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 50 percent of aggregated rotation months occur at participating site(s) that are rural PPS hospitals or non-provider site(s).</li> <li>• Rural participating site(s) are located in a rural county (outside any Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA)).</li> <li>• The program includes required rotations at a non-rural PPS hospital or non-provider site.</li> </ul>
<b>Question:</b>	<b>How is it determined that a participating site is located in a rural area for the purpose of an ACGME RTP designation request?</b>
Answer:	A participating site is considered rural if its street address is located in a county that is outside of any urban CBSA. This is verified using information from the County to CBSA Crosswalk File and Urban CBSAs and Constituent Counties for Acute Care Hospitals File on the most recent IPPS Final Rule Home Page that is current at submission of the ACGME RTP designation request. Email <a href="mailto:muap@acgme.org">muap@acgme.org</a> for more information.
<b>Question:</b>	<b>How will this designation be identified in the ACGME's Accreditation Data System (ADS)?</b>
Answer:	Programs that meet designation criteria and receive Initial Accreditation will see the ACGME Rural Track Program designation on the letter notifying the program of Initial Accreditation. The designation will likewise appear on the program's public profile in ADS and on a publicly available report of ACGME-accredited programs with this designation.

### ACGME RTP Structure

<b>Question:</b>	<b>Do rotations have to be in a specific sequence or order (e.g., urban first, then rural)?</b>
Answer:	The order or sequence of participating sites to which residents/fellows rotate is not a criterion of ACGME RTP designation. There may be program accreditation considerations pertaining to the order or sequence of resident/fellow rotations. Questions regarding accreditation should be directed to staff members of the relevant specialty Review Committee, whose contact information may be found on the relevant <a href="#">specialty section of the ACGME website</a> .
<b>Question:</b>	<b>Is the percentage of aggregated rotation months at rural participating sites calculated for the duration of the program or per year? Can a program with ACGME RTP designation schedule exactly 50% of resident/fellow rotations at rural participating sites?</b>

Answer:	In programs with ACGME RTP designation, more than 50 percent of aggregated rotation months over the duration of the program (e.g., more than 18 months for three-year programs) occur at rural participating sites. Programs with 50 percent or less than 50 percent of rotations at rural participating sites will not receive ACGME RTP designation.
<b>Question:</b>	<b>What types of participating sites can provide rural rotations in an ACGME RTP?</b>
Answer:	Rural rotations can occur at participating sites that are rural Medicare-eligible acute care hospitals under the PPS and/or rural non-provider sites (previously referred to as non-hospital sites). A rural participating site has a street address in a county that is outside any urban CBSA. The Federal regulations that establish the PPS can be found in <a href="#">42 CFR § 412</a> . Federal regulations define non-provider sites or settings in <a href="#">42 CFR § 413.75(b)</a> ; examples include freestanding clinics, nursing homes, and physicians' offices [see <a href="#">42 CFR § 413.78(g)</a> ]. The status of critical access hospitals (CAHs) as non-provider sites is clarified in pages 42411-42416 of the <a href="#">FY 2020 IPPS Final Rule</a> .
<b>Question:</b>	<b>Are there restrictions on the number or distance of participating sites in an ACGME RTP?</b>
Answer:	The number and relative distance of participating sites are not reviewed in the ACGME RTP designation request process. There may be program accreditation considerations related to the number and distance of sites. Programs are encouraged to review the specialty- or subspecialty-specific Program Requirements and FAQs found on the relevant <a href="#">specialty section of the ACGME website</a> . Questions regarding accreditation should be directed to staff members of the relevant specialty Review Committee, whose contact information may also be found on the relevant <a href="#">specialty section of the ACGME website</a> .
<b>Question:</b>	<b>Is an ACGME RTP required to have a separate program director than the ACGME Rural Track Related Program?</b>
Answer:	While program directors and other personnel are not reviewed in the ACGME RTP designation request process, there may be accreditation considerations. Questions regarding accreditation should be directed to staff members of the relevant specialty Review Committee, whose contact information may be found on the relevant <a href="#">specialty section of the ACGME website</a> .
<b>Question:</b>	<b>Could a new Sponsoring Institution submit an ACGME RTP designation request for their first program application? Could a Sponsoring Institution sponsor multiple programs with ACGME RTP designation?</b>
Answer:	There are no restrictions on ACGME RTP designation within a Sponsoring Institution. Questions regarding program accreditation should be directed to staff members of the relevant specialty Review Committee, whose contact information may be found on the relevant <a href="#">specialty section of the ACGME website</a> .
<b>Question:</b>	<b>Is the identification of an ACGME Rural Track Related Program a factor in designation?</b>
Answer:	The identification of a related ACGME-accredited program is optional and provides an opportunity to inform the ACGME that resources or experiences (e.g., overlapping rotations) may be shared by residents/fellows in a program with ACGME RTP designation and those in another ACGME-accredited program in the same specialty/subspecialty and Sponsoring Institution. Identification of an ACGME Rural Track Related Program is not needed to receive the ACGME RTP designation.