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Northern Border Region Healthcare Support Program Reflects on Year of Successful, Innovative Approaches

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) aims to bring more healthcare related funding opportunities to the region. As part of this goal, the NBRC partnered with the Federal Office of Rural Health (FORHP) on the Northern Border Region Healthcare Support Program. Announced in a [press release in September 2023](#), the project was funded through FORHP, which awarded the Rural Health Redesign Center Organization a supplemental award to support seven organizations across the Northern Border Region with focused one-year healthcare programming.

“It is incredibly exciting to see how these organization have utilized public investments in innovative and collaborative ways to deliver better patient care. NBRC applauds their commitment to finding solutions to improving access to rural health,” said **NBRC Federal Co-Chair Chris Saunders**. “Thanks to partners like the Health Resources Services Administration, these investments are part of a collaborative federal approach to addressing the needs of residents of the Northern Border Region.”

With the programming window now coming to a close, awarded organizations detailed the progress brought to their communities through these strategic healthcare initiatives.

Maine

Community Care Partnership of Maine’s ECHO Learning Community (Project ECHO)

This project was created to support providers and care teams in Maine’s rural communities in offering low-barrier access to medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) treatment. Project ECHO has been successful in contributing to Maine’s opioid response and recovery community through several platforms including the creation of a toolkit for rural health centers looking to administer low-barrier MOUD, including XRB, which will continue to benefit Maine’s healthcare community and beyond for years to come.

The Daniel Hanley Center for Health Leadership

This organization has been providing customized in-person leadership development training for rural physicians and advanced practice providers in Aroostook County, to address the substance use disorder (SUD) crisis, physician and provider burnout, and the implementation of new payment models. Take a closer look at the core competencies these trainings focus on by [visiting their website](#).

New Hampshire

Ammonoosuc Community Health Services (ACHS) Portable Teaching Kitchen

Under this initiative [two portable teaching kitchens](#) were purchased in order to travel to different community settings to teach individuals different ways of cooking healthy meals, and improved meal planning. Further, the initiative sought to reduce social isolation through community-based cooking classes.

Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital - Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity

This project has trained pediatricians in rural Vermont and New Hampshire to provide Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) treatment to prevent dental decay in young children who do not have access to traditional dental care. More information and a PDF of “The Use of Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) in Pediatric Care” toolkit can be found on the [Dartmouth Health website](#).

New York

Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization

This organization has collaborated with primary care and social service providers to improve primary care access, patient experience, and address health equity issues. This included workforce trainings and the implementation of patient-centered strategies to better serve low-income, disabled, and elderly individuals living in rural areas.

Canton-Potsdam Hospital, St. Lawrence Health Peer Support Network

The St. Lawrence Health System (SLH) developed the Peer Support Net program to enhance access to healthcare, specifically in Behavioral Health/SUD, and improve recruitment and retention of peer recovery advocates. The program included ongoing training, additional compensation for peer advocates, and direct funds to meet patients' more immediate needs.

Vermont

Brattleboro Memorial Hospital – Mobile Integrated Healthcare

Brattleboro Memorial Hospital and Rescue, Inc. have partnered to provide in-home assessments and an external support system for patients recovering from total joint replacement in their homes. This program has directly improved patient health outcomes, decreased hospital re-admissions and improved the patient and caregiver experience. The *Brattleboro Reformer* highlighted the partnership in a [March 2024 article](#).

About the Northern Border Regional Commission (www.nbrc.gov)

Created in 2008, the Northern Border Regional Commission is a federal-state partnership whose mission is to help alleviate economic distress and encourage private sector job creation in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.