

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 has developed processes addressing ACGME-accredited programs that seek to create “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 (Type 1) and the ACGME Rural Track Program designation (Type 2) for already accredited programs to expand with a new rural site. Additional information and resources can be found on the [Rural Track Program designation 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.

ACGME RTP Background and Terms

Question:	What is an ACGME Rural Track Program?
Answer:	An ACGME Rural Track Program is defined as “An ACGME-accredited program in which all or some residents/fellows gain both urban and rural experience with more than half of the education and training for the applicable resident(s)/fellow(s) taking place in a rural area (any area outside of an urban Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA)).” Visit the ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page to learn more.
Question:	What is ACGME Rural Track Program designation?
Answer:	ACGME Rural Track Program designation is defined as “A classification provided by the ACGME that identifies Rural Track Programs at the time of application for accreditation (Type 1) or with the approval of a permanent complement increase request and the addition of at least one new rural participating site (Type 2).” Visit the ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page to learn more.
Question:	To which specialties and subspecialties does the ACGME Rural Track Program designation apply?
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 specialty section of the ACGME website .
Question:	How does the ACGME Rural Track Program designation relate to CMS rural track policy?
Answer:	The ACGME RTP designation aligns with rules and regulations of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that address “rural tracks” in 42 CFR §413.79(k) . 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).

ACGME RTP Designation Request Process and Criteria

Question:	Which type of ACGME RTP designation should a program choose?
Answer:	If you do not yet have an ACGME-accredited program within your Sponsoring Institution, you can request a Rural Track Program designation Type 1 at application for program accreditation. If you already have an ACGME-accredited program within your Sponsoring Institution and want to create a Rural Track Program within that same specialty, you can either pursue a Type 1 designation with a separately accredited program or a Type 2 designation to expand the existing program with a new rural track. Programs must be in Continued Accreditation status to pursue a Type 2 designation, consistent with ACGME policies and procedures. There may be many other reasons for a program to choose one type of ACGME RTP designation over the other, including the program mission and aims, development timeline, costs, resource requirements (including personnel), oversight and authority, and outcomes tracking.
Question:	What is included in the ACGME RTP designation request?

Answer:	The Type 1 designation request is initiated in advance of a program accreditation application and requires program director information, program information (program details and participating site information), a block diagram upload, and the ACGME RTP Rotation Information Form upload. The Type 2 designation request is initiated in concert with a permanent complement increase request, using a sidebar option within the “Program” tab of a program’s Accreditation Data System (ADS) profile. To complete a Type 2 request, programs update the program information (if applicable), add at least one new rural participating site, update faculty information (if applicable), submit a permanent complement increase request, and upload the ACGME RTP Rotation Information Form and Specialty-Specific Rural Track Program Questionnaire (if applicable). Review the ACGME RTP Designation Instructions document on the ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page or email muap@acgme.org to learn more.
Question:	How is a request for ACGME RTP designation Type 1 related to a program’s accreditation application?
Answer:	The Type 1 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 ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page for more information.
Question:	How can an existing ACGME-accredited program request ACGME RTP designation?
Answer:	An existing ACGME-accredited program seeking to expand with a new rural track can request ACGME Rural Track Program designation (Type 2) using a sidebar option within the “Program” tab of a program’s Accreditation Data System (ADS) profile. The request will include adding a rural participating site and submitting a permanent complement increase request. Refer to the ACGME RTP Designation Request Instructions document on the ACGME Rural Track Program designation web page for more information.
Question:	What are the ACGME RTP designation criteria?
Answer:	<p>The criteria for ACGME RTP designation Type 1 are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 50 percent of aggregated rotation months occur at participating site(s) that are rural PPS hospitals or non-provider site(s). • Rural participating site(s) are located in a rural county (outside of an urban Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA)). • The program includes required rotations at a non-rural PPS hospital or non-provider site. <p>The criteria for ACGME RTP designation Type 2 are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the Type 1 criteria; and, • At least one rural participating site is new (program’s current residents/fellows do not rotate there).

Question:	How is it determined that a participating site is located in a rural area for the purpose of an ACGME RTP designation request?
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 muap@acgme.org for more information.
Question:	How will this designation be identified in the ACGME’s Accreditation Data System (ADS)?
Answer:	Programs that meet Type 1 designation criteria and achieve Initial Accreditation will see the ACGME Rural Track Program designation on the letter notifying the program of Initial Accreditation. Programs that meet Type 2 designation criteria and receive approval of the permanent complement increase request and site changes (if applicable) from the relevant Review Committee will see the ACGME Rural Track Program designation on the letter notifying the program of permanent complement increase approval. The designation likewise appears on the program’s public profile in ADS and on a publicly available report of ACGME-accredited programs with this designation.
Question:	What sites should be listed on the RTP Rotation Information Form for ACGME RTP designation Type 2?
Answer:	For existing ACGME-accredited programs seeking ACGME Rural Track Program designation Type 2, the Rotation Information Form should only reflect the experiences of the rural track residents/fellows.
Question:	What are the deadlines and timeframe for submitting a request for ACGME RTP designation?
Answer:	If the designation request is not missing any information, the MUA/P and GME staff review process can take less than a week. Programs should reference the Review Committee agenda closing dates for new program applications (for ACGME RTP designation Type 1) found on the relevant specialty section of the ACGME website (contact a Review Committee staff member if program application deadlines are not listed). See the Program Application Information web page for more information. Questions regarding Review Committee process timeframes for Type 2 designation should be directed to a staff member of the relevant specialty Review Committee, whose contact information may be found on the relevant specialty section of the ACGME website .
Question:	If the ACGME RTP designation request is declined, can a program still apply for accreditation or request a complement increase?
Answer:	Programs seeking ACGME RTP designation Type 1 that do not meet designation criteria can proceed with the program application without designation. Programs seeking ACGME RTP designation Type 2 that do not meet designation criteria can submit a complement increase request without an accompanying designation request. Information previously entered in the complement section during the designation request will still be accessible.

ACGME RTP Structure

Question:	Do rotations have to be in a specific sequence or order (e.g., urban first, then rural)?
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 specialty section of the ACGME website .
Question:	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 percent of resident/fellow rotations at rural participating sites?
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.
Question:	What types of participating sites can provide rural rotations in an ACGME RTP?
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 42 CFR § 412 . Federal regulations define non-provider sites or settings in 42 CFR § 413.75(b) ; examples include freestanding clinics, nursing homes, and physicians' offices [see 42 CFR § 413.78(g)]. The status of critical access hospitals (CAHs) as non-provider sites is clarified in pages 42411-42416 of the FY 2020 IPPS Final Rule .
Question:	Are there restrictions on the number or distance of participating sites in an ACGME RTP?
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 specialty section of the ACGME website . 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 specialty section of the ACGME website .
Question:	Is an ACGME RTP Type 1 required to have a separate program director than the ACGME Rural Track Related Program?
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 specialty section of the ACGME website .
Question:	Could a new Sponsoring Institution submit an ACGME RTP designation Type 1 request for their first program application? Could a Sponsoring Institution sponsor multiple programs with ACGME RTP designation?
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 specialty section of the ACGME website .
Question:	Is the identification of an ACGME Rural Track Related Program a factor in Type 1 designation?
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 Type 1.
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