

WI LOAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Annual Report, FY2021-2022



WISCONSIN OFFICE OF

Rural Health

Wisconsin created the **Health Professions Loan Assistance Program** in 1989 to address workforce shortages in underserved rural and urban communities. Since then, hundreds of health care providers have received assistance in paying down education loans, in return for three years of service in these communities. In 2014 Wisconsin added the **Rural Physician Loan Assistance Program**, which addresses chronic provider shortages in rural communities. These programs help to increase access to health care in communities that have traditionally lacked providers, including primary care Physicians, Dentists, Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Nurse Midwives, and Dental Hygienists. This report reflects Loan Assistance Program (LAP) activity from July 2021 to June 2022.

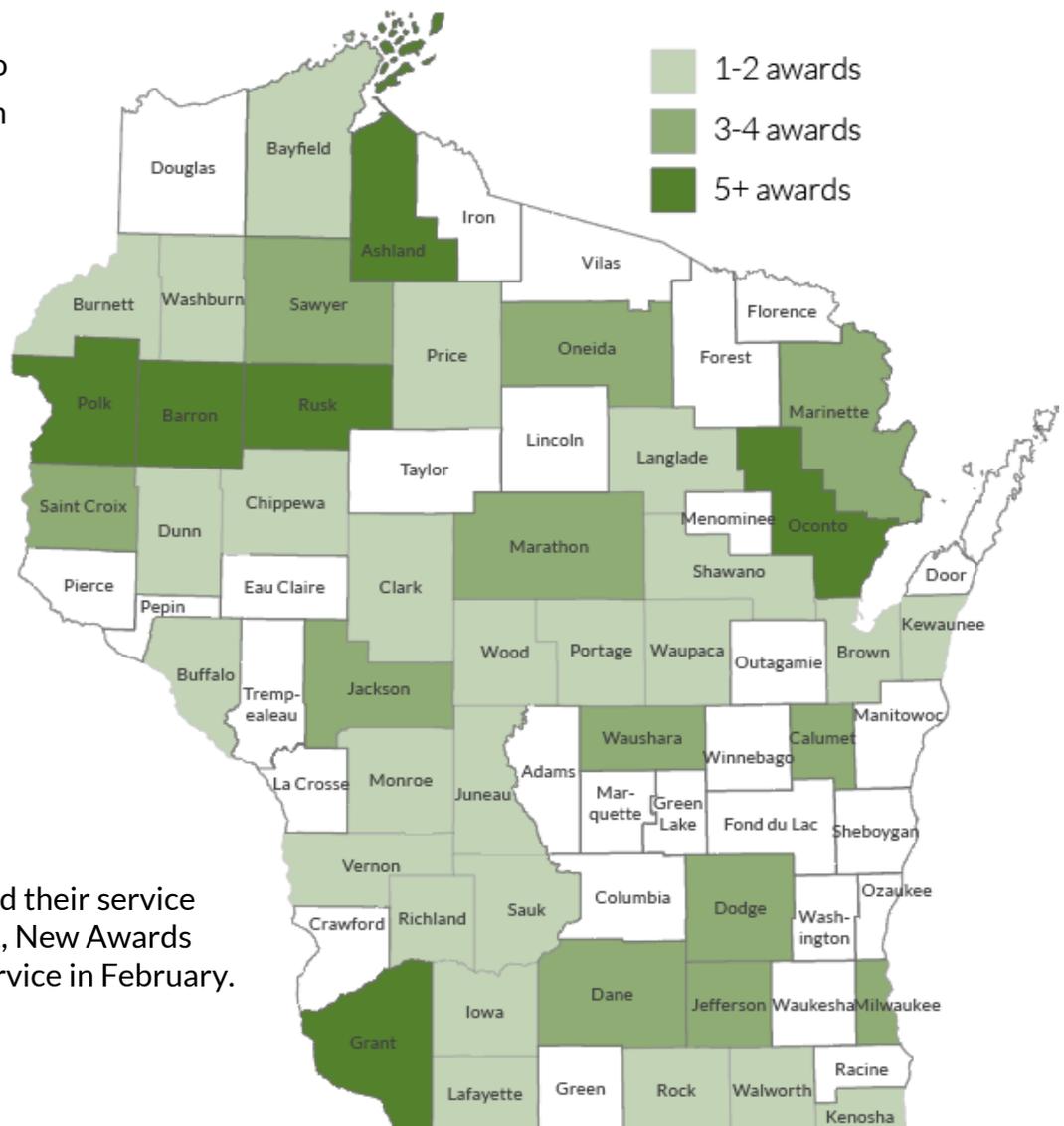
AWARDS

\$1,061,230 was awarded to health care providers to pay down educational loans in return for three years of service

The money was distributed via **106** concurrent awards:

- Service Year 1: **29**
- Service Year 2: **25**
- Service Year 3: **25**
- New Awards: **27**

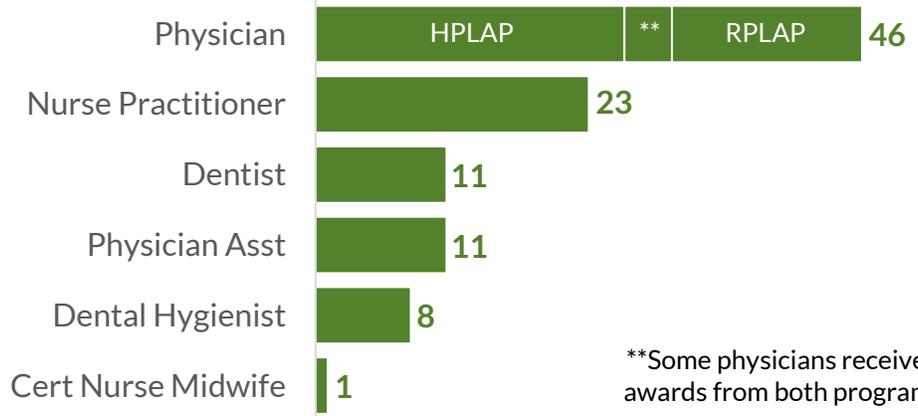
Year 3 awardees completed their service obligation in January 2022, New Awards began their first year of service in February.



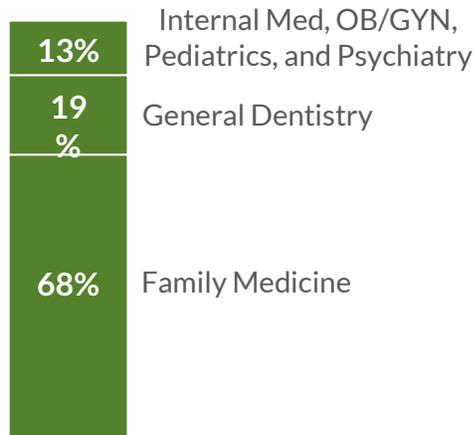
AWARDEES & PRACTICE SITES

100 healthcare providers received awards*:

Profession:

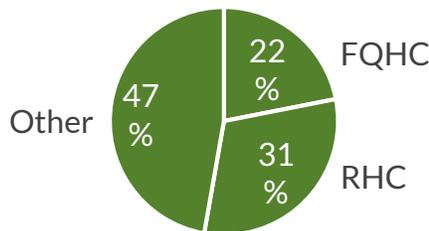


Specialty:



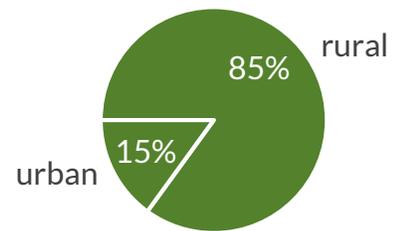
Awardees practiced at **78** clinics in underserved areas:

Clinic type:



Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and Rural Health Clinic (RHC) are designations given by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Clinic rurality:



Median HPSA score, 2019-2021: **13**

*The number of awards (page 1) is different than the number of awardees because some awardees received more than one award

LAP IMPACTS

The LAP helps to recruit and retain healthcare providers in communities that experience chronic provider shortages. In their third year of service, LAP awardees are asked about their experience with the Program. Of those who completed their service obligation this year:

43% said LAP was a factor in deciding to work at their practice site

97% intend to stay at their practice site after their LAP contract ends

"I believe my commitment is now complete but I have no plans on changing my current position. I appreciate what the state of WI has done for me. It has meant a lot to me that I had loan repayment and was not burdened with having to pay it off. Thank you so much for choosing me." - Family Medicine Nurse Practitioner

"This award came at a critical time to encourage me to stay practicing in this community. It allowed me to fully immerse myself in this practice... I fully plan to stay in this community and I plan to continue practicing medicine here." - Family Medicine Physician

"The LAP is what attracted me to the clinic, but I plan to stay due to the structure, wages, benefits, and customer-focused approach." - Dentist

PROGRAM SUPPORT & OUTREACH

LAP administration and promotion are essential for the Program's success. The LAP Manager guides providers and staff through the award process, responding to inquiries on eligibility, Program requirements, completing applications, and receiving award payments. The Program manager also speaks with students, residents, and practice site staff throughout the year to ensure that eligible providers and sites are aware of the Program and its value, both as a recruitment/retention tool and as a method for providers to reduce education loan debt.



0.5 FTE administrative staff



Reviewed and processed:
47 applications
27 new contracts
77 payments



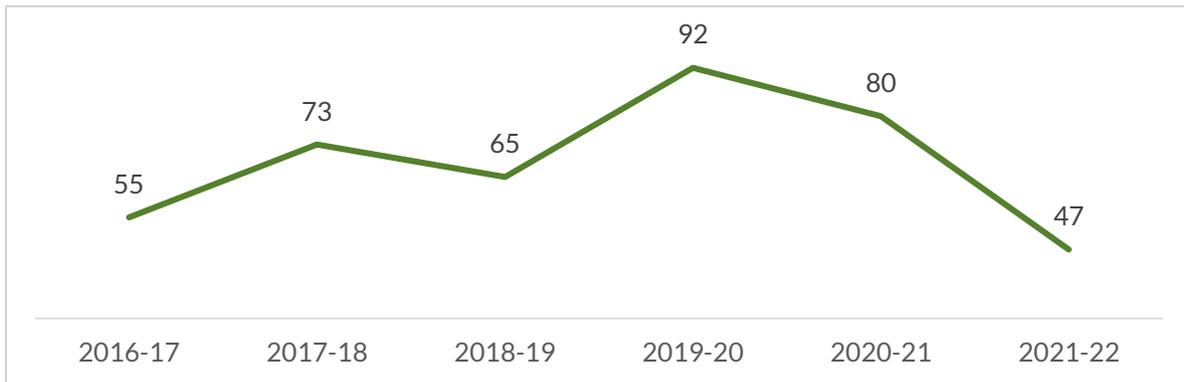
Provided assistance
194 times to LAP applicants, awardees, and practice sites



Promoted LAP in a variety of ways including
5 presentations to
78 potential participants

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LAP received about 75 applications each year. The number of applications received in 2021, however, was well below average at 47. This may be due to several factors: 1) The National Health Service Corps received a large influx of pandemic relief funding, which allowed additional loan assistance awards through this federal program; 2) General uncertainty in the health care industry due to the pandemic may have caused some providers to avoid long-term commitments, such as LAP's three-year service obligation; and 3) There has been an ongoing discussion among policy makers regarding education loan forgiveness. Providers may be waiting to see how this is resolved before committing to loan assistance programs. These are all ongoing factors, which may impact the number of LAP applications for several years.



Thank you to the members of the Rural Health Development Council for assisting with application review and advising WORH on the Loan Assistance Program.

Funding for the Loan Assistance Program is provided by HRSA's Health Workforce State Loan Repayment Program, Wisconsin Tribal Gaming Revenue, and the Wisconsin Critical Access Hospital Assessment.

For more information about the Loan Assistance Program, visit worh.org

Or contact Kevin Jacobson, Loan Assistance Program Manager, kmjacobson2@wisc.edu

