



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The challenge

Rural Americans experience persistent and widening health disparities, driven by limited provider access, geographic isolation, behavioral health workforce shortages, and reduced availability of preventive and wellness resources. These barriers contribute to poorer outcomes, higher per-capita costs, and preventable complications, and require scalable, technology-enabled solutions capable of rapid deployment and measurable impact.

The solution

WebMD Ignite is the nation's leading partner in healthcare digital transformation, empowering organizations to improve clinical effectiveness, patient engagement, and system-wide outcomes. Through proprietary technology, unmatched reach, and award-winning educational content, Ignite delivers personalized, timely, and clinically relevant health education at critical decision points — supporting better outcomes, higher satisfaction, and sustainable performance improvement.

Ignite **Health Education & Access for Rural Transformation (HEART)** is a shovel-ready, turnkey program. It is purpose-built for rural healthcare providers operating under accelerated timelines, constrained budgets, and the need for outcomes aligned with CMS's Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program funding and reporting requirements.

Four competitive differentiators

1 Direct alignment with RHT Program funding priorities

HEART is explicitly designed to support state-funded RHT objectives, including:

- Chronic disease prevention and management
- Provider workflow optimization and workforce relief
- Value-based care and quality performance improvement
- Telehealth and remote-monitoring enablement
- Sustainable digital infrastructure for long-term rural innovation

This alignment enables rapid approval, streamlined reporting, and clear linkage between program investment and measurable outcomes.

2 Integrated consumer engagement, clinical excellence, and rural impact

HEART uniquely combines three capabilities rarely delivered in a single, scalable solution:

- **Consumer-facing engagement platform:** Always-on, 24/7 access to a comprehensive health collection, including 3,000+ videos, interactive tools, and dozens of evidence-based health risk assessments that educate and activate patients outside the clinical setting
- **Clinical-grade content at scale:** URAC-accredited and NCQA-certified multimedia resources spanning pediatrics through geriatrics, behavioral health, chronic disease, oncology, surgery, nutrition, and preventive care, ensuring clinical credibility and consistency across care settings
- **Proven, documented outcomes:** Demonstrated impact including a 0.8-day reduction in average length of stay (ALOS), 7-point improvement in HCAHPS scores, increased patient engagement, and measurable reductions in staff burden

3 Rural-ready, low-burden implementation infrastructure

HEART is designed for rapid, low-friction deployment in rural environments:

- **Accelerated implementation:** Consumer and clinical integrations completed in weeks, not months, with minimal IT resource requirements
- **Pre-built interoperability:** FHIR-based APIs enabling seamless integrations with leading EHR platforms
- **Proven at scale:** Successfully deployed across 650+ hospitals and systems, 80+ health plans, and extensive rural networks, including Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)
- **Specialized expertise:** Dedicated teams with deep experience and understanding in health literacy, engagement, and healthcare-specific workflows

4 Measurable ROI supporting post-grant sustainability

HEART delivers quantifiable value that supports long-term continuation beyond grant funding:

- **Operational efficiency:** Reduces staff burden through automated, personalized education while streamlining care coordination and patient communication, contributing to improved workforce satisfaction and retention
- **Accountability and transparency:** Real-time analytics dashboards track engagement, utilization, and outcomes, providing clear performance metrics
- **Sustainable adoption model:** Flexible procurement and rural-accessible pricing support statewide and local deployment, backed by a scalable SaaS architecture that ensures continuity beyond FY2031

The bottom line

WebMD Ignite provides the essential, health engagement infrastructure required to translate RHT Program investments into measurable, sustainable rural health outcomes. HEART is implementation-ready, rapidly deployable, and designed to operate with minimal IT burden — delivering documented clinical improvement, operational efficiency, and clear ROI that extends well beyond initial grant funding cycles.

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1. WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Rural communities face a convergence of challenges that strain traditional healthcare delivery models: limited access to providers and facilities, vast geographic distances, behavioral and mental health workforce shortages, and reduced access to preventive and wellness resources. These barriers drive persistent disparities in outcomes, higher costs, and avoidable complications — challenges that require technology-enabled solutions capable of rapid deployment.

The CMS Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program represents a historic \$50 billion federal investment to address these disparities. Participating states must demonstrate measurable improvements in access, quality, and outcomes within aggressive timelines. Success requires solutions that are:

- **Turnkey**, and deployable across diverse rural settings with limited IT capacity
- **Evidence-based**, and aligned with federal accountability and reporting standards
- **Outcome-driven**, supporting prevention, chronic disease management, and behavioral health
- **Sustainable**, creating infrastructure that persists beyond grant funding cycles

2. THE RHT PROGRAM: HOW HEART SUPPORTS STATE GOALS

Health Education & Access for Rural Transformation (HEART) is designed to operationalize RHT Program objectives through a single, integrated engagement infrastructure that supports rural providers, care teams, and communities.

1 Prevention and community health impact

State challenge: Limited preventive care capacity and low health literacy in high-risk rural populations.

HEART enables:

- Population-level prevention through URAC-accredited, NCQA-certified education across prevention, chronic disease, maternal health, and behavioral health
- Always-on access to trusted prevention and wellness education via a 24/7 consumer health collection (articles, videos, and interactive tools)
- Culturally responsive, health-literacy-optimized education aligned with rural demographics
- Measurable impact through analytics tracking usage, engagement, and completion

Result: Prevention extends beyond clinic walls into homes and communities.

2 Sustainable access and rural facility viability

State challenge: Maintaining access while ensuring financial viability for CAHs and rural facilities.

HEART enables:

- Improved throughput and capacity via documented 0.8-day ALOS reduction
- Quality and experience gains, including 7-point HCAHPS improvement

- Affordable, scalable SaaS pricing designed for rural budgets
- ROI-positive performance supporting sustainability beyond FY2031

Result: Better care delivery with fewer resources and stronger financial footing.

3 Workforce sustainability

State challenge: Workforce shortages, burnout, and retention risk.

HEART enables:

- Reduced clinician burden through automated, personalized patient education
- Embedded workflow support via EHR integration, eliminating duplicate work
- Consistent education resources supporting new and early-career providers

Result: Rural practice becomes more efficient, sustainable, and professionally rewarding.

4 Innovative care delivery (telehealth, EMS, value-based care)

State challenge: Expanding access while managing cost and quality.

HEART enables:

- Pre- and post-visit education that improves telehealth effectiveness
- Education supporting remote patient monitoring (RPM) adherence and self-management
- Patient activation aligned with value-based quality measures
- Shared education infrastructure across EMS, care teams, and community partners

Result: Innovative care models deliver measurable impact, not just access.

5 Technology, interoperability and analytics

State challenge: Deploying health IT that rural providers can adopt, afford, and sustain.

HEART enables:

- Deployment in weeks with minimal IT burden
- Seamless integration into clinical workflows via FHIR, APIs, or direct EHR integration
- Metadata-rich content mapped to ICD-10, SNOMED CT, CPT, LOINC, RxNorm, and MeSH for precise clinical search and seamless connectivity with health information exchanges and EHR systems
- Evidence-based micro-interventions that translate complex health guidance into actionable steps
- Real-time analytics demonstrating program impact and ROI

Result: Enterprise-grade infrastructure accessible to even the smallest rural providers.

3. THE WEBMD IGNITE MODEL

WebMD Ignite is the leading partner in healthcare engagement, enabling organizations to improve clinical effectiveness, patient experience, and system-wide outcomes. Through proprietary technology, unmatched reach, and award-winning, clinically reviewed multimedia content, Ignite delivers personalized education at the moments that matter most.

Backed by more than 50 years of expertise across Krames, Healthwise, The Wellness Network, and WebMD, Ignite supports more than 650 health systems and hospitals — including CAHs and FQHCs — along with 80+ health plans and numerous health technology partners nationwide. HEART brings these proven capabilities together into a single, shovel-ready, turnkey model purpose-built to support rural health transformation.

Comprehensive, clinically relevant content

Ignite content forms the foundation of HEART — an integrated solution that guides patients and consumers and supports clinicians at key moments across the health journey. Every resource is grounded in clinical guidelines, evidence-based demographic trends, user research, and real-world clinical expertise. Refreshed on a 24-month cycle and informed by behavioral science, the content is designed to translate complex health information into clear, actionable guidance that drives engagement, confidence, and better outcomes.

- **Extensive condition coverage:** More than 1,000 multimedia resources available for each of the following: Pediatrics and child health, obstetrics and gynecology, oncology, general and specialty surgery, physical medicine and rehabilitation, wellness, and emergency care
- **Healthcare journey navigation:** Education supporting patients and caregivers from primary care and behavioral and mental health (including substance use and treatment), through specialty, surgical, and post-acute care
- **Comprehensive drug monographs:** Coverage of most prescription and OTC medications and vaccines available in the United States, including indications, administration, side effects, and storage and disposal guidance

State-led delivery model

HEART is delivered through a flexible, state-led partnership structure designed to maximize value while minimizing administrative burden:

- Statewide deployment with volume-based pricing efficiencies
- Simplified procurement through master agreements
- Flexible sub-award alignment, including grants, incentive payments, shared services, and vendor contracts
- Aggregated reporting to demonstrate statewide RHT impact

Built for long-term sustainability

Built-in sustainability mechanisms ensure HEART delivers lasting value beyond initial funding periods:

- Persistent improvements in health literacy and self-management
- Demonstrable ROI through utilization reduction and quality improvement
- Vendor-managed updates that support ongoing innovation and scalability

4. HEART: IMPLEMENTATION-READY FOR RHT

HEART brings together a coordinated set of implementation-ready solutions designed to support CMS RHT Program priorities. Each component can be deployed independently or as part of a unified approach, enabling rapid rollout, minimal IT lift, and measurable impact across the rural health continuum.

Ignite Clinical Solutions

Clinical Solutions deliver multimedia education and decision-support tools at the point of care, combining written guidance, engaging video, and image-rich visuals to enhance health literacy, support shared decision-making, and enable safer recovery. These solutions integrate seamlessly into clinical workflows via SMART on FHIR®, APIs, or direct EHR integration, allowing clinicians to deliver personalized, up-to-date education while tracking clinician adoption and patient engagement.

Ignite on FHIR®

- Delivers up-to-date, SMART on FHIR® enabled content within clinician workflows
- Automatically suggests, delivers, and documents education content
- Accessible via patient portals or print in 20 languages
- Provides robust reporting on clinician adoption and patient engagement

Ignite On-Demand

- Delivers a comprehensive health collection of 18,000+ clinically reviewed written and video assets through an intuitive, on-demand platform
- Enables personalized patient education using plain-language content, detailed visuals, and condition-specific resources
- Supports digital and print delivery across care settings, in multiple languages
- Simplifies education delivery outside the EHR

Ignite Patient and Consumer Solutions

Patient and Consumer Solutions provide evidence-based, risk-tailored guidance that empowers individuals to take preventive action and follow up on clinical recommendations. Delivered through omnichannel access, including patient portals, mobile devices, print materials, and integration into outreach campaigns, these solutions meet individuals where they are and support ongoing engagement.

HealthHub

- Delivers a branded, turnkey consumer health collection featuring articles, videos, interactive tools, quizzes, and prevention resources
- Offers clinically reviewed, URAC-certified content governed by the WebMD Ignite Quality Management Accreditation Council
- Accessible through a WCAG-compliant experience for all literacy levels
- Supports flexible deployment via a fully hosted, branded site or API that integrates seamlessly into existing websites, mobile apps, or custom consumer experiences

HealthAdvisor

- Provides a comprehensive suite of evidence-based health risk assessments (HRAs) covering chronic conditions, behavioral health, cancer screening, and orthopedic risk
- Delivers risk-specific guidance and clear calls to action that direct users to appropriate education, prevention, screening, or clinical care based on individual results
- Demonstrates proven impact on care-seeking behavior, with measurable increases in treatment engagement and preventive screening following assessment completion

Ignite Care Coordination Solutions

Care Coordination Solutions support care managers and health teams with tools to deliver consistent, personalized education and follow-up across the care continuum. Prebuilt disease management interventions and ongoing patient engagement ensure essential educational materials reach patients and caregivers in waiting areas, at the bedside, and at home. Together, these channels keep patients informed and engaged, reduce clinician burden, and support improved outcomes.

Coach

- Enables care managers to support patients and caregivers with prebuilt disease management interventions and personalized engagement across in-person and telephonic interactions
- Reinforces learning between encounters through tailored follow-up education, including videos, interactive tools, and condition-specific resources
- Integrates seamlessly into care management workflows, allowing teams to efficiently manage engagement while maintaining program consistency and quality standards

Print

- Extends patient education to broadband-limited environments, supporting rural settings, low-bandwidth access, and varying levels of digital literacy
- Offers 600+ clinically reviewed print titles spanning prevention, procedure preparation, recovery, and chronic disease management
- Provides flexible, customizable formats — including ready-to-use handouts, brochures, tear sheets, and branded booklets — to fit clinical workflows

WebMD TV

- Transforms patient rooms and waiting areas into education touchpoints with curated, award-winning health and wellness video programming
- Delivers space-appropriate content, from universal wellness to service-line-specific education, that informs care decisions and next steps
- Engages patients and families through video-first experiences that educate, inspire, and connect them to relevant services

5. DATA & SECURITY

WebMD Ignite solutions are built with enterprise-grade security and privacy safeguards aligned with HIPAA and NIST standards. Protections include encryption in transit and at rest, role-based access controls, audit logging, network segregation, and independent validation. No sale or secondary use of patient data is permitted.

HIPAA compliance

Platforms are designed to meet HIPAA requirements for the protection of electronic protected health information (ePHI), incorporating:

- **Administrative safeguards:** workforce training, role-based access management, incident response procedures
- **Physical safeguards:** secure data centers with 24/7 monitoring, card-key access, and physical isolation of equipment
- **Technical safeguards:** encryption, access controls, audit logging, and system monitoring

Data protection

Industry-standard encryption is used to secure sensitive information both in transit and at rest, leveraging NIST-approved algorithms. A multi-zone network architecture includes carrier-grade routers, redundant firewalls with deny-by-default policies, intrusion detection systems, and network segmentation to isolate web, application, and database layers.

Privacy by design

Privacy considerations are embedded throughout the product development lifecycle. Access to sensitive data follows the minimum necessary principle and requires management approval. Data retention and secure destruction practices align with HIPAA requirements and established information governance standards.

Independent validation

Security practices are aligned with the NIST Cybersecurity Framework and supported by ongoing internal controls and independent third-party assessments to validate compliance, resilience, and risk management.

6. CLOSING: A CLEAR PATH FROM INVESTMENT TO IMPACT

The Rural Health Transformation Program presents a rare opportunity to convert historic investment into lasting improvements in access, quality, and equity for rural communities. Achieving that promise requires solutions that are implementation-ready, evidence-based, and accountable — capable of delivering measurable results within accelerated timelines while building sustainable infrastructure for the future.

HEART provides a foundation for rural health transformation, aligning patient education, engagement, technology, and analytics into a single, scalable solution. With rapid deployment, minimal IT burden, and documented impact across clinical, operational, and financial measures, HEART enables states to move from planning to execution with confidence.

WebMD Ignite is prepared to partner with states to support RHT Program goals through proven, secure, and sustainable engagement infrastructure. This approach helps ensure today's investments drive measurable outcomes well beyond the grant period.