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**TO:** Chambers of Commerce, Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIAs), Career Centers, Non-Profit Organizations, Economic Development Boards

**FROM:** **Russ Deaton**

**SUBJECT:** Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant: Call for Proposals

**DATE:** **August 5, 2015**

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Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has designed a statewide approach to providing community-based services for adults with some college, no degree for the purpose of increasing the credential attainment of this population. It is our intent to call for proposals from communities, broadly defined. For the purposes of this grant, a “**community**” will be defined as a city, county, geographic region, or cluster of the previous entities, existing in the State of Tennessee. An “**adult**” will be defined as those who are in the age range of 25-64 inclusive, who started a postsecondary credential but did not finish. This initiative is a component within the larger Drive to 55 effort and subsequent Tennessee Reconnect initiatives. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is pleased to provide you with the Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant Request for Proposals.

THEC has secured \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) for the provision of this grant to communities. Grants funds will be available to recipients for the establishment of community centers that will serve the needs of Tennessee adults interested in completing a postsecondary credential. These centers, Tennessee Reconnect Communities (TRCs), will function as connecting-places; engaging higher education institutions, local employers, local organizations, and adult learners alike. This initiative, based on the Graduate! Network’s (TGN) proven model for improving outcomes for adult learners, will engage resources such as local businesses, higher education institutions, local community organizations and government to provide adults with advising, support, a personalized path to and through college, and provide a space to connect the aforementioned stakeholders in larger statewide degree-attainment efforts.

THEC will award grants to communities that identify the readiness, commitment, and community partnerships to implement this proven model to significantly improve outcomes for their adult learners.

Please be aware of a few important details:

- THEC will host one informational webinar on **August 12, 2015 at 9:00am Central Standard Time** (10:00am Eastern Standard Time). Webinar details can be found on page 16 and will also be posted on THEC’s website ([www.tn.gov/thecc](http://www.tn.gov/thecc)). The webinar will be recorded and posted on the THEC website to be accessible to applicants after August 12.

- Because THEC anticipates that multiple proposals from overlapping service areas may be submitted, THEC will prioritize those applicants who have the greatest impact and service area reach within their proposal. To assess this reach, a Letter of Intent to Participate is required to apply. This letter is due no later than **12:00pm Central Standard Time** (1:00pm Eastern Standard Time) **on August 17, 2015**. Please see page 16 for specific requirements for this Letter of Intent. Before submitting full proposals, THEC will contact applicants to confirm their Letter of Intent. Because THEC expects multiple proposals from overlapping service areas, communities and constituencies, THEC will offer applicants the opportunity to coordinate and consolidate Letters of Intent up until **5:00pm Central Standard Time** (6:00pm Eastern Standard Time) **on August 21, 2015**.
- Full proposals are due on **September 23, 2015 by 5:00pm Central Standard Time** (6:00pm Eastern Standard Time). Please see grant timeline on page 14 of the RFP for key dates regarding the application and review process.

THEC looks forward to receiving your submissions.



**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**And**

**GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION**

**TENNESSEE RECONNECT COMMUNITIES**

**PROPOSALS DUE**

**SEPTEMBER 23, 2015**



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## I. Overview

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### The Drive to 55 and Tennessee Reconnect

Educational attainment rates are below the national average in most Tennessee counties<sup>1</sup>. This presents a problem for workforce quality, which will only increase as new skills become in demand. The Georgetown Center for Education and Workforce estimates that by 2020, 58 percent of the jobs in Tennessee will require a postsecondary education credential or training<sup>2</sup>. In 2013, only 37.1 percent of Tennessee residents had a postsecondary credential. The goal of the Drive to 55 is to address this gap, bringing the percentage of Tennesseans with college degrees or certifications to 55 percent by the year 2025.

Achieving Tennessee's Drive to 55 relies largely on the recruitment, retention, and completion of adults in higher education. Tennessee Reconnect, the adult-focused efforts of the Drive to 55, engages the over 900,000 Tennessee adults over 25 who have some college but have not completed their degree, and the 1.4 million Tennesseans over 25 with only a high school degree.<sup>3</sup>

In response, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission has issued the *2015-2025 Master Plan for Higher Education*, which sets forth statewide degree and certificate production targets necessary for meeting the statewide goal of 55 percent education attainment. Tennessee must have 79,200 *additional* state residents (beyond current production levels) with postsecondary credentials over the next 10 years; this is around 850 additional credentials per year. Two-thirds of this growth will need to come from adult learners, or around 52,000 *additional* credentials earned by adults by 2025. **THEC's goal for the Tennessee Reconnect Community effort is for eight communities to serve 32,000 adults combined by 2025.**

### What is the Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant?

This grant funds the establishment of mobile and/or place-bound community centers that will serve the needs of Tennessee adults pursuing credentials. The centers will function as connecting-places; engaging institutions, local employers, local organizations, and learners alike. In scaling the effort to build TRCs statewide, it is our design to call for proposals from communities, broadly defined. A "**community**" will be defined as a city, county, geographic region, or cluster of the previous entities, existing in the State of Tennessee.

The unique function of the Tennessee Reconnect Communities (TRCs) necessitates community partnerships. THEC seeks applications from Chambers of Commerce, LWIAs, Career Centers, Non-Profit Organizations, Economic Development Boards, Non-governmental organizations, and others. Tennessee has dedicated \$2,000,000 (two million dollars) to support 6-8 Tennessee Reconnect Community initiatives before July 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, M. and the Center for Economic and Business Research, University of Tennessee (2015) Report to the Governor of Tennessee. <http://cber.bus.utk.edu/erg/erg2015.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Carnevale, A., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job growth and education requirements through 2020*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S1505; generated by Kevin Bradley; <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>; (27 July 2015).

During this round of proposals, THEC will choose a cohort of three (3) communities to launch in early 2016. In mid-2016, THEC will choose the second cohort of five (5) communities to launch their services in late 2016. To provide assistance to communities in this endeavor, THEC is releasing competitive grants to communities as defined above to provide the residents of their service area with the advising, support and personalized path to postsecondary educational success.

Eligible applicants include\*\*:

- Community foundations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Urban/Rural Coalitions
- Collective Impact Entities
- 501(c)(3) Organizations
- Business Coalitions or Business Leadership Groups

*\*\*Postsecondary education institutions and local governmental agencies are **not** eligible to be lead applicants but will serve as partners in the community efforts. Please see page 20 for a description of these partnerships.*

Successful grants will:

- Identify innovative solutions and community partnerships
- Include sustainable support systems
- Include plans to promote sustainability and continue projects beyond the funding of the grant
- Connect goals to improving higher education outcomes

Grantees will receive (1) technical assistance in developing and launching services for adults in their community who wish to complete a postsecondary credential; (2) funds to support start-up costs for Tennessee Reconnect Community Centers; and, (3) participation in the Tennessee Reconnect Community Network (TRCN).

- 1) **Technical assistance:** Provided by the Graduate! Network and THEC, this will include strategic and operational planning support including but not limited to training, data collection, service delivery design, marketing and communications.
- 2) **Start-up funds:** Funding to support hiring staff, providing a location or mobile services, marketing support, a Client Resource Management system, etc.
- 3) **Participation in the Tennessee Reconnect Community Network:** through this network, the state will provide consistency in practice and messaging, technical assistance, capacity building, feedback loops, marketing support, and additional resources to magnify the efforts of the communities.

Communities that are awarded the grant will be designated as “Tennessee Reconnect Communities” (TRCs) and recognized for their efforts to encourage and support their adult residents to complete a postsecondary credential.

**Tennessee Reconnect Communities: Providing Local Delivery of Advising Services**

One of the first – and most difficult – steps for an adult going back to college is reaching out to someone for information and help. Currently, there is no single point of contact an adult can access for comprehensive information and guidance about returning to school in Tennessee. Many adults who would have completed a degree won't, because of the confusing maze of postsecondary options and requirements. Adults talk to people they know to learn about going back to college. Few go directly to admissions offices to explore the idea of going back to college<sup>4</sup>. Community-based services give adults an opportunity to talk to advisors who are institution-neutral in order to ease the process of returning to higher education.

Through supporting postsecondary completion initiatives for adult learners, communities will increase their overall economic development opportunities. Ownership of the Drive to 55, and, in this case, the adult learner programs of the Tennessee Reconnect initiative, means that communities will assist and support their residents and neighbors in the pursuit of postsecondary completion.

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<sup>4</sup>Kresge Foundation (2013) Is college worth it for me? How adults think about going back to college.  
*PublicAgenda.org*

## II. Partners

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### A. Lumina Foundation

The Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant is partially funded through the Lumina Foundation. The Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's approach focuses on helping to design and build an accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a sense of urgency for action to achieve this goal<sup>5</sup>. Under these guidelines, THEC aims to support the state's innovative reform environment through a grant from the Lumina Foundation. The focus of this Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant is on postsecondary recruitment, retention and completion of adult learners in Tennessee through community-level outreach and personalized support.

### B. The Graduate! Network

THEC in partnership with the national Graduate! Network (TGN) will provide the capacity, resources, and expertise to help Tennessee communities design holistic local strategies for increasing access to and success in postsecondary education for adults. TGN's approach is to provide technical assistance in community readiness analysis, data collection, community engagement, service delivery models, and ongoing professional development. This will result in a community-based effort of service delivery to adults that is unique to the community's needs and characteristics. While one-on-one high-touch services are essential to providing quality guidance to returning adults and are a significant part of TGN's model that Tennessee will utilize, helping communities build the capacity to better serve adult learners also involves engaging and serving multiple community stakeholders. These mutually beneficial relationships are created with and between the community sites, local employers, higher education institutions, and community-based organizations around the goal of increased degree attainment, particularly with regard to adult learners.

TGN is non-profit organization whose work is based on collective impact strategies, which bring together entities from different sectors to collaboratively commit to solving a complex social issue. The partnership between Tennessee and TGN will provide our communities with training, guidance, support, and information that allow communities to develop sustainable and locally-focused Drive to 55 efforts for adults, which will bring a variety of stakeholders to the table. TGN is currently working with twelve (12) cities across the country, including Memphis, and has built and sustained a national network, working with over forty (40) community and business partners and fifty-six (56) colleges and universities. TGN will provide its expertise to help our Tennessee communities design holistic local strategies and leverage state resources, to increase access to and success in postsecondary education for adults.

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<sup>5</sup><http://www.luminafoundation.org/our-work>

Their model is based on four components:

- Raise awareness of the **economic and social value of investing in adult college completers**
- **Mobilize stakeholders and connect resources** from business, government, higher education, funders, community-building organizations, and returning adult students
- Activate **policies and practices that support these adults within the systems** and organizations where they work or learn
- Provide quality **services** that are **tailored to the needs of returning adult students**, in a way that **aligns systems, expands and accelerates what exists, and fills gaps**

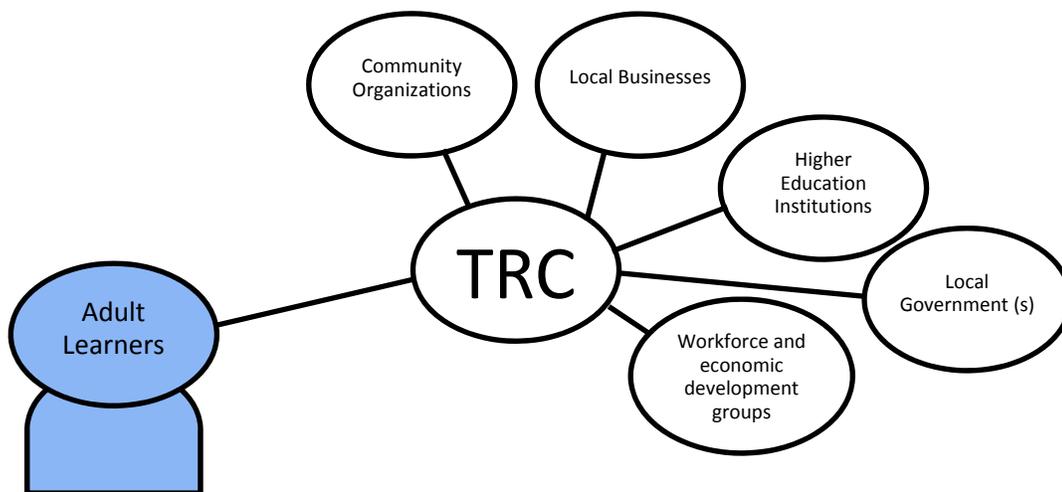
### III. Tennessee Reconnect Communities Overview

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Communities can best achieve impact when there is commitment and investment in collectively working together to achieve goals, provide clarity on ownership and processes, adapt models to local context, use expertise and data to guide design and decisions, and create structured opportunities to learn from peers.

#### A. Tennessee Reconnect Communities: Local Partnerships

Tennessee Reconnect Communities (TRCs) will be charged with reaching out to and supporting adults locally to re-enroll in postsecondary education and complete a postsecondary credential. Through the TRC, prospective adult learners will be connected to a single point of contact, a person who can help them navigate the path to college in a personalized and unique approach. The TRC sites will provide adults who have some college but no degree with a variety of services including free advising, career counseling, and scholarship resources. The sites will act as a connecting point for local employers, local institutions of higher education, and prospective adult learners, working to create awareness of the benefits of adult completion as a strategy for economic development and a source for workforce talent. These communities will engage local business, local higher education institutions, local government, workforce and economic development groups, and community organizations to garner resources, identify and eliminate obstacles, and create new pathways for adults to complete a college degree.



TRCs as connecting-places

## **B. Tennessee Reconnect Community Outcomes**

Throughout the strategic planning and operations set-up, each TRC will establish individual outreach goals to connect with the larger statewide goals of adult education attainment through the Drive to 55 and subsequent Tennessee Reconnect initiatives. The overarching quantitative goal for the Tennessee Reconnect Community effort is for the eight (8) Tennessee Reconnect Communities to provide services to a total of 32,000 adults by 2025. Community goals will utilize this statewide goal when developing their own outreach goals and strategic partnerships with community-based organizations, higher education institutions and employers. Additionally, communities will establish long-term goals of creating a sustainable and cultural change around postsecondary education and completion among adults in their community. It is THEC's vision that Tennessee Reconnect Communities will lead the way in developing a community culture in which adult learners are supported and have resources to make informed decisions about returning to higher education. Tennessee Reconnect Communities will accomplish this by developing their own strategic plans, participating in the larger Tennessee Reconnect Community Network, becoming centers of excellence and engaging surrounding communities in developing their own adult learner completion agendas.

## **C. Tennessee Reconnect Community Network: State Partnership**

TRCs will also have the support of a statewide network. Each TRC will benefit and grow their services and expertise through support, idea-sharing and collaboration between TRC sites, to be facilitated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). Through this Tennessee Reconnect Community Network (TRCN), the state will provide consistency in practice and messaging, technical assistance, capacity building, feedback loops, marketing support, and additional resources to magnify the efforts of the communities. It is through this network that all TRCs will communicate best practices and coordinate their efforts. The Tennessee Reconnect Community Network (TRCN) will also develop into a community of practice, with each community site identifying their unique strengths and providing other Tennessee communities with professional development and strategies they can use to develop those same resources in their communities.

### **A. Leveraging Additional Tennessee Reconnect Initiatives**

Tennessee Reconnect Communities will also have statewide Tennessee Reconnect programs and resources to leverage at the local community level. It is THEC's vision that the TRC sites will work in partnership with THEC to deploy these resources within their communities and play a prominent role in furthering the development of these adult learner engagement strategies. The Tennessee Reconnect Communities will also be significant in providing community and adult learner insight into these initiatives. The following list is among the state-level resources/initiatives to be leveraged and operationalized at the community level. For more information about Tennessee's comprehensive adult learner initiatives please visit: [www.tn.gov/thecc](http://www.tn.gov/thecc)

- i. **Adult Learner Portal:** THEC is currently working to develop a web portal focused on providing resources to adults returning to, or enrolling for the first time, in postsecondary education. This new public website will help adults navigate learning opportunities available at Tennessee institutions that are also aligned with career opportunities throughout the State. Adults will have the capability to determine degree plans, transferability of past credits and calculate time and cost to degree completion. All TRC sites will be trained on the functions of the portal and will integrate its usage into the suite of TRC provided services. The web portal is anticipated to be completed and launched by December 2015.
- ii. **Partnerships with local Adult Learning Focused Institutions (ALFIs).** In August 2015, THEC will award approximately 15 Ready to Reconnect grants of up to \$50,000 each to public and private not-for-profit two- and four- year institutions and TCATs for the purpose of creating services and support to adult learners to increase their success in postsecondary education. The 12-month projects will commence in September 2015. As part of the grant application process, 25 Tennessee institutions completed the ALFI assessment enabling them to understand institutional barriers to adult learner success and design solutions to alleviate these barriers. Communities will leverage the expertise and partnership of the ALFI institutions in developing their TRC sites and services. Please see Appendix E for a list of the 25 Tennessee ALFI institutions.
- iii. **Reconnect + Complete.** Tennessee's adult learner re-engagement initiative will reach the 85,000+ Tennessee adults aged 25-64 who have earned at least 50 percent of credits toward a degree but have never finished college. The purpose of Tennessee Reconnect + Complete is to locate these adults and provide resources for Tennessee public and private, not-for-profit institutions to reach out to them and encourage them to finish their degree. In September 2015, THEC and the Governor's office will host a meeting for institutional representatives to commence the Reconnect + Complete efforts. Attendees will receive resources which will highlight best practices, outreach resources, and the contact information for their former adult student non-completers. Institutions will then be able to reach out to the adults directly, offering information about their institution as well as the statewide Tennessee Reconnect + Complete effort. TRCs should partner with their local institutions and develop and provide services, information, and outreach support to this population.
- iv. **Employer & Workforce Agency engagement efforts.** Previous planning work between THEC and workforce and economic development leaders around encouraging employers to support employees' continued education to a credential will be developed at the local levels through the TRCs. This may include services, such as on-site advising, provided to local employers by TRCs.

#### IV. Tennessee Reconnect Communities Timeline of Activities

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Tennessee Reconnect Community RFP & Implementation Timeline	
Item	Date/Deadline
THEC releases Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant	Wednesday, August 5
Potential applicants participate in webinar	9:00am CST, Wed., August 12
Webinar & FAQs posted to THEC site	Thursday, August 13
Applicants submit Letters of Intent to Participate	12:00pm CST, Monday, August 17
If applicable, applicants submit <i>revised</i> Letters of Intent	5:00pm CST, Friday, August 21
RFP due to THEC from applicants	5:00pm CST Wednesday, Sept. 23
THEC Announces Grant Awards	Monday, October 5
1 <sup>st</sup> Cohort (3) TRC sites begin Grant Activities	Monday, November 2
TRCs develop and implement Operations Plan with TGN	November 2015 – March 2016
1 <sup>st</sup> Cohort (3)TRCs Launch	March 2016
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cohort (5) sites begin Grant Activities	July 1, 2016
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cohort (5) TRCs develop & implement Operations Plan	July 2016 – November 2016
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cohort (5)TRCs Launch	November 2016

## V. Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant Details

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THEC will award the Tennessee Reconnect Community Grants to communities through a competitive proposal process. Successful grants will:

- Identify innovative solutions and community partnerships
- Include sustainable support systems
- Include plans to promote sustainability and continue project beyond the funding of the grant
- Connect goals to improving higher education outcomes

Grantees will receive (1) technical assistance in developing and launching services for adults in their community who wish to complete a postsecondary credential; (2) funds to support start-up costs for Tennessee Reconnect Community Centers; and, (3) participation in the Tennessee Reconnect Community Network.

- 1) **Technical assistance:** Provided by the Graduate! Network and THEC, this will include strategic and operational planning support including but not limited to training, data collection, service delivery design, marketing and communications.
- 2) **Start-up funds:** Funding to support hiring staff, providing a location or mobile services, marketing support, a Client Resource Management system, etc.
- 3) **Participation in the Tennessee Reconnect Community Network:** through this network, the state will provide consistency in practice and messaging, technical assistance, capacity building, feedback loops, marketing support, and additional resources to magnify the efforts of the communities.

Communities that are awarded the grant will be designated as “Tennessee Reconnect Communities” and recognized for their efforts to encourage and support their adult residents to complete a postsecondary credential.

### A. RFP Timeline

Tennessee Reconnect Communities Grant Timeline	
Item	Date/Deadline
THEC releases Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant	Wednesday, August 5
Potential applicants participate in webinar	9:00am CST/10:00am EST Wed., August 12
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RFP due to THEC from applicants	5:00pm CST/6:00pm EST Wed., Sept. 23
THEC Announces Grant Awards	Monday, October 5
Communities Begin Grant Activities	Monday, November 2

## B. Webinars for Communities

THEC will host an informational webinar for communities interested in participating in the Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant on **August 12, 2015 at 9:00am Central Standard Time** (10:00am Eastern Standard Time). Please see the registration link below:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1485590111019375105>

This link and the webinar details will also be posted on THEC's website ([www.tn.gov/thec](http://www.tn.gov/thec)). The recorded webinar and a compiled list of Frequently Asked Questions will be posted on the THEC website and accessible to applicants after August 12. **Direct all questions regarding the webinar to Maryann Rainey at [maryann.rainey@tn.gov](mailto:maryann.rainey@tn.gov).**

The webinar content will include:

- An overview of the RFP; the process and timeline of the grant competition (THEC);
- The Graduate! Network model including the Tennessee Reconnect Community process and details about the technical assistance provision (Graduate! Network);
- Insight into an existing Graduate! Network site which provides community-based services for adult learners.

## C. Letter of Intent to Participate: Requirements

THEC is requiring communities to submit letters of intent to indicate their commitment to both submitting a grant proposal and working in partnership with TGN and THEC. The letters of intent should also identify a main point of contact and the organization name with which TGN and THEC will communicate throughout the RFP process. Each letter must include the signature of this point of contact. Letters are due from communities to THEC via email to Jessica Gibson at [Jessica.Gibson@tn.gov](mailto:Jessica.Gibson@tn.gov) by **12:00pm CST (1:00pm EST) Monday, August 17, 2015**. The subject line should state 'TN Reconnect Community Grant Letter of Intent' with the community's name. Additionally, please include the following items within your letter of intent:

- Describe in narrative form the geographic area/service area and demographic information of adult learners your TRC intends to serve.
- List the primary county/counties your proposed TRC will serve.
- List the primary city/cities your proposed TRC will serve.
- Estimate the number of adult learners your proposed TRC will serve.
- List the names or potential organizations/entities who will serve as a partner in this work.

THEC intends to share this information with other applying groups whose proposals would potentially serve the same area. The purpose of this is to identify groups whose proposals could benefit from collaboration and consolidation. If applicable, THEC will notify these applicants and they will have the opportunity to submit one *joint* proposal as reflected in a revised letter of intent.

Your group's decision to submit a revised letter of intent will not affect the scoring of your proposal. The deadline for revised letters of intent is **5:00pm CST (6:00pm EST) on Friday, August 21.**

#### **D. Preparation of the Application**

Listed below are the required application components. The narrative sections of the proposal must be 1.5-spaced and the font used must not be smaller than 11-point. This narrative portion of the application (Illustration of Current Context – Section B, Leveraging Community Partnerships & Collaborations – Section C, Sustainability Plan – Section D, and Budget Narrative – Section E) shall **not** exceed 12 pages. Please see page 19 for further instructions. The proposal sections should be labeled and returned in order, as shown:

- **Cover Page (Section A; Appendix B)**  
*Signature required.*
- **Illustration of Current Context (Section B)**
- **Leveraging Community Partnerships & Collaborations (Section C)**
- **Sustainability Plan (Section D)**
- **Budget Narrative (Section E)**

#### **E. Submission of Grant Application**

The grant proposal submission deadline is **5:00pm Central Standard Time (6:00pm Eastern Standard Time), September 23, 2015.** THEC will announce selected grantees on **October 5, 2015,** and implementation will begin November 2, 2015. The expectation is that the program will be sustainable in nature and can continue beyond the period of the grant. Please see the rubric in **Appendix C** for scoring details.

Applicants must submit a full proposal with signatures to THEC electronically. Electronic submission should be sent to Jessica Gibson at [Jessica.Gibson@tn.gov](mailto:Jessica.Gibson@tn.gov). To be considered for funding, proposals must be received at THEC no later than **5:00 PM CST on September 23, 2015.** Incomplete applications will not be considered.

#### **F. Proposal Review Process**

As proposals are received, they will be reviewed by THEC staff for completeness and compliance with eligibility requirements. Any questions about significant omissions from a proposal or about applicant eligibility will be referred to the proposing applicant.

A review panel will evaluate eligible applications in light of the required application components. The panel will review each eligible application and make recommendations. The scores and recommendations from the review panel will be the primary determinant of successful proposals and will form the basis for negotiation and final selection.

Following the review process, THEC will notify the primary contact to discuss any modifications that may be required of selected communities. THEC intends to fund proposals that show the most promise and willingness to create a cultural change at the community level to positively influence the outcomes and educational attainment of adult students.

**G. Award Conditions**

The amount of funding awarded to each community may vary based on community service area size, number of projected adult students served, project activities, and resources needed to fully and successfully implement the activities to better serve adult students. Awards are contingent upon THEC receiving funding from the Lumina Foundation, availability of funds within the grant budget, and upon the State's evaluation of funded programs for compliance with project requirements and effectiveness of project implementation.

**H. Grant Requirements**

Each eligible contracted community must report its progress in meeting short-term goals identified in the grant proposal to THEC. In order to build a community of practice, contracted communities must participate in communications with other TRC sites to share progress and ideas. Further information regarding reporting requirements and forms will be provided by THEC after the grant is awarded.

## VI. Proposal Requirements

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Proposals can earn up to 100 points based on the following application components. Each application submitted **must** include:

### A. Cover Page

Applicants must complete the TN Reconnect Community Grant cover page and include all required signatures (**Appendix B**). Applicants must designate a primary contact who will report to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and the Graduate! Network (TGN) throughout the RFP process and the potential subsequent TRC process.

### B. Illustration of Current Context (30 Points)

Proposals must include a detailed explanation of the current condition, culture and context of postsecondary access and success among the adult population in their proposed service area. Applicants must also discuss the importance of this community initiative and why it is crucial to the community's workforce and economic development. This section should additionally address the following aspects:

#### a. *Discussion of your Proposed Tennessee Reconnect Community's Impact & Reach*

1. **Define your community:** Geographically and demographically define and describe the service area for your proposed Tennessee Reconnect Community. For example, is it a metropolitan area, micro-metropolitan area, county, multiple counties or city? Please include the rationale for defining your community and service area in this way.
2. **Explain your community's need:** Please use relevant and current economic and workforce data to discuss the condition of adults in your service area 25 years and older who have some college, but no degree. Additionally, please reference Appendix D for the educational attainment data by Tennessee County from the American Community Survey (ACS) data for further context.
3. **Discuss how becoming a TRC will impact your community:** Describe your goals and anticipated outcomes in terms of impacts on adult student access, retention, and completion, and on impacts in the community in terms of workforce and economic improvements. Additionally estimate the number of adults who will potentially access your TRC services.

#### b. *Discussion of Strengths*

1. Proposals must address how the community's strengths and community partnerships can be leveraged to address the challenges of adult degree attainment.
2. Proposals should describe any current postsecondary attainment initiatives within their service area, their framework and alignment with the Drive to 55 and how these programs will contribute and collaborate with the proposed Tennessee Reconnect Community. If applicable, please provide supporting documentation and describe the outcomes and success metrics of these initiatives.

c. **Discussion of Challenges**

1. Proposals should address how your service area’s structural, geographic, capacity-related, financial, and other realities contribute to making adult degree attainment a challenge for adult learners.

C. **Leveraging Community Partnerships & Collaborations (30 Points)**

The Tennessee Reconnect Community model is based on collective impact strategies, which bring together entities from different sectors to collaboratively commit to solving a complex social issue. Therefore, elements of collaboration between governmental agencies, local employers, higher education institutions and local community based organizations will be critical to the success and sustainability of the Tennessee Reconnect Communities. This section should address the following aspects as it relates to partnerships and collaborations:

1. Please list in the table below **existing and potential** partnerships which will be leveraged for the proposed TRC. Please note that multiple entities in each category are allowable and encouraged.

Additionally, please identify if the organization is a Champion or a Partner. A **Champion(s)** is one who will support, advocate and promote the cause of the TRC by messaging, activating others and creating public awareness. A **Partner(s)** is one who will support by undertaking responsibilities, providing resources and provide expertise to the TRC. Additionally please include the rationale for selecting the organization to lead this initiative and a brief description of its current functions within the community.

<b>Entity Name</b>	<b>Champion or Partner</b>
Local Government Agencies	
Employers/Business Leadership	
Higher Education Institutions/Leadership	
Community Based Organizations	
Workforce Agencies	
Economic Development Agencies	
Funders	
Other	

2. How will you leverage partnerships like those listed above to develop a cross-sector approach for a community-based initiative on adult degree attainment?
3. If applicable, please identify any current formal economic development agendas that include strategies for adult postsecondary completion initiatives.
4. Applicants should provide a brief summary and proof of collaboration in the form of a signed letter from the collaborators identified above. Signed letters should include **organization name, contact name, title, and contact information.**

**D. Sustainability Plan (20 Points)**

Applicants should provide strategies they will use to maintain momentum and sustain the spirit and impact of this work after grant funding ends. Applicants should additionally explain how the Tennessee Reconnect Community grant project elements will be sustained beyond the life of the grant. The proposal should not simply account for a one-time project, but instead should present the start of a change at the community level.

**E. Budget Narrative (20 Points)**

As part of the grant proposal, communities should submit a budget **narrative** which summarizes various funding opportunities that can be leveraged within the community. Grant funds provided through the Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant will cover partial start-up expenditures, and the maximum allowance for each community through this grant is \$200,000.

THEC and TGN have provided the following list of expenditures that a community can anticipate for starting a TRC site. This list is not exhaustive but should provide applicants a framework for gathering funds for the TRC initiative. Please identify with an (“X”) the *anticipated* sources of funds for each item below for 2016 and 2017 in the table below. **Do not** include anticipated amounts at this point. Amounts that are already included below should be considered permanently funded from the identified sources.

Expenditures	2016			2017		
	TRC Grant funds	In-Kind Support	Other funds	TRC Grant funds	In-Kind Support	Other funds
<b>Personnel</b>						
Director (FT)						
Lead Advisor Salary (FT)						
Advisors (at least 1 FT, 2 PT)						
Communications/Marketing Coordinator (PT)						
Administrative Support (PT)						
Intern (PT)						
Benefits						
Payroll Expenses						
<b>Programmatic Expenditures</b>						
Local Website Development & Management <sup>6</sup>						
Marketing/Advertising <sup>7</sup>						
Outreach/Recruitment Events						
Annual Graduate! Network Membership*						\$5000
CRM* <sup>8</sup>			\$1200			\$1500
Travel <sup>9</sup>						
Meetings						
Office Supplies						
Evaluation						

<b>Operations</b>						
Rent						
Utilities						
Technology <sup>10</sup>						
Furniture/Equipment						

\*Signify fixed costs that will be required.

<sup>6</sup>Website Estimated Expenditures include but not limited to:

- Domain registration
- Local website adaptation & updates

<sup>7</sup>Marketing/Advertising Estimated Expenditures include but not limited to:

- Branding & design
- Community presentations
- Marketing materials: brochures, postcards, flyers, promotional giveaways, posters, etc.
- Media buys (*optional*)

<sup>8</sup>CRM Estimated Expenditures:

- TGN customization of CRM
  - Non-Profit Package
    - 10 FREE Licenses
    - Additional licenses: \$30/month
    - College/Community Partner licenses: \$1,700/20 licenses
  - Initialization/customization
    - 1<sup>st</sup> Year: FREE via TGN
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> Year: \$250
  - Report Generator
    - \$120/year
  - Mass email integration
    - \$600/year for up to 5,000 email addresses
  - Form Generator
    - \$480/year

<sup>9</sup>Travel Estimated Expenditures include but not limited to:

- Annual TRC Directors meeting (Nashville, TN) - 1-day/overnight
- Annual TRC Advisors training (Memphis, TN) - 1- day/overnight

<sup>10</sup>Technology Estimated Expenditures include but not limited to:

- Mobile phones w/ headsets (Advisors)
- Laptop computers (Director & Advisors)

APPENDIX A – Application Checklist



Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant Competition

Application Checklist

Status	Item	Date(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Potential applicants participate in webinar	9:00am CST, Wed., August 12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicants submit Letters of Intent to Participate	12:00pm CST , Mon., August 17
<input type="checkbox"/>	If applicable, applicants submit <i>revised</i> Letters of Intent to Participate	5:00pm CST, Friday, August 21
<input type="checkbox"/>	RFP due to THEC from applicants	5:00pm CST Wed., Sept. 23



**Tennessee Reconnect Community Grant  
Request for Proposals  
COVER PAGE**

Applying Community:			
Lead Organization:			
Primary Contact Name:			
Title:			
Address (Include County):			
Telephone:		Fax:	
E-Mail:			

Certification by Primary Contact:

The designee certifies that, to the best of his/her knowledge, the information in this application is correct and that the filing of this application is duly authorized by the applicant organization specified above.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name and Title of Primary Contact

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Primary Contact

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Applying Community Name \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points	Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<p><b>Illustration of Current Context</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the proposal include a detailed explanation of the current condition, culture and context of postsecondary access and success among the adult population in their proposed service area?</li> <li>- Does the proposal discuss the importance of this community initiative and why it is crucial to the community's workforce and economic development?</li> <li>- Does the proposal geographically and demographically define the service area and provide rationale for defining their community?</li> <li>- Does the proposal use economic workforce data to discuss the condition of adults in their service area?</li> <li>- Does the proposal describe goals and anticipated outcomes in terms of impacts on adult student access, retention, and completion, and on impacts in the community in terms of workforce and economic improvements?</li> <li>- Does the proposal address how the community's strengths and community partnerships can be leveraged including currently postsecondary attainment initiatives in their service area?</li> <li>- Does the proposal address how internal and external realities contribute to making adult degree attainment a challenge for adult learners in their service area?</li> </ul>			
<p><u>Scoring Range</u></p> <p>30- The proposal includes a detailed explanation of the current context, strengths, challenges, and the significance of this initiative including anticipated outcomes and goals and used relevant data.</p> <p>15- The proposal includes an explanation of the current context, strengths, challenges the significance of this initiative including anticipated outcomes and goals and used relevant data but lacks sufficient detail.</p> <p>1-It is unclear that the proposal has considered the current context, strengths, challenges, and the significance of this initiative including anticipated outcomes and goals and usage of relevant data.</p>			

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points	Reviewer Score	Comments/Recommendations
<p align="center"><b>Leveraging Community Partnerships &amp; Collaborations</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>30</b></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the proposal address list existing and potential partnerships which will be leveraged and identify champions and partners?</li> <li>- Does the proposal include rationale for selecting the lead organization and a brief description of its current functions?</li> <li>- Does the proposal discuss how it will leverage partnerships to develop a cross-sector approach?</li> <li>- Does the proposal identify any current formal economic development agendas that include strategies for adult postsecondary completion initiatives?</li> <li>- Does the proposal include a brief summary and proof of collaboration in the form of signed letters?</li> </ul> <p><u>Scoring Range</u></p> <p>30-Proposal includes a significant list of existing and potential partnerships, includes rationale, how it will leverage partnerships and have strong letters of commitment to collaboration.</p> <p>15-Proposal includes a list of existing and potential partnerships, includes rationale, how it will leverage partnerships and have letters of commitment to collaboration however the strength of these partnerships lack depth.</p> <p>1-The proposal does not include a list of partnerships and lacks letters of commitment to collaboration from external partners.</p>			

<b>Sustainability Plan</b>	<b>20</b>		
<p>The proposal provides a detailed explanation of how the Tennessee Reconnect Community grant services and activities will be sustained at the community beyond the life of the grant. The proposal shows evidence of integrating the project and associated long-term goals into the community.</p> <p><u>Scoring Range</u></p> <p>20- Proposal includes a detailed explanation of how Tennessee Reconnect Community grant services and activities will be sustained beyond the life of the mini-grant and integrated into the community.</p> <p>10- Proposal includes intention for grant services and activities to be sustained beyond life of the grant and integrated into the community but lacks complexity.</p> <p>1- Proposal does not include sustainability plan.</p>			
<b>Budget Narrative</b>	<b>20</b>		
<p>The budget narrative is detailed and summarizes various funding opportunities which can be leveraged within the community. The community has identified diverse sources of funds and has justified these sources throughout the budget narrative.</p> <p><u>Scoring Range</u></p> <p>20 – Budget narrative is complete with diverse sources of funding, sufficient justifications and detail.</p> <p>10 – Budget narrative lacks diverse sources of funding and lacks detail but is reasonable given the scope of the work.</p> <p>1 – Budget narrative does not identify sources of funding and is incomplete.</p>			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>		

**Educational Attainment by County:  
Getting to 55 Percent with Adults**

**Educational Attainment by County, Population 25 -64  
(Associate's or Above)**

County	Total Population 25-64	Educational Attainment Rate (% with a Degree 25-64)	Additional Degrees Needed to Reach 55%	% Some College No Degree (25-64)	Population 25-64 with Some College No Degree	If every adult with some college no degree earned a credential, this would be the county's educational attainment rate
Anderson	39,671	30.5%	9,735	21.7%	8,613	52%
Bedford	23,233	18.6%	8,458	18.7%	4,335	37%
Benton	8,593	15.7%	3,377	21.3%	1,832	37%
Bledsoe	7,141	14.8%	2,870	20.1%	1,436	35%
Blount	65,906	30.3%	16,249	22.6%	14,907	53%
Bradley	52,044	29.2%	13,426	23.2%	12,068	52%
Campbell	21,455	14.5%	8,694	16.4%	3,524	31%
Cannon	7,388	18.1%	2,728	18.8%	1,389	37%
Carroll	14,319	21.0%	4,870	22.0%	3,146	43%
Carter	30,348	24.2%	9,346	20.2%	6,144	44%
Cheatham	22,044	28.1%	5,927	20.1%	4,424	48%
Chester	8,258	25.0%	2,476	24.4%	2,013	49%
Claiborne	17,071	21.3%	5,751	16.4%	2,805	38%
Clay	3,927	18.0%	1,453	14.3%	561	32%
Cocke	19,188	16.5%	7,385	16.3%	3,128	33%
Coffee	27,378	25.6%	8,044	21.1%	5,786	47%
Crockett	7,455	18.4%	2,728	18.4%	1,373	37%
Cumberland	26,928	23.4%	8,520	18.2%	4,892	42%
Davidson	360,867	44.0%	39,667	20.5%	74,057	65%
Decatur	5,872	21.8%	1,950	19.5%	1,143	41%
DeKalb	9,995	17.9%	3,709	19.3%	1,934	37%
Dickson	26,756	21.1%	9,061	21.7%	5,798	43%
Dyer	19,988	26.5%	5,699	20.0%	4,000	46%
Fayette	21,076	29.6%	5,357	22.4%	4,714	52%
Fentress	9,326	16.5%	3,588	13.3%	1,243	30%
Franklin	20,418	26.0%	5,924	20.4%	4,166	46%
Gibson	25,317	24.2%	7,805	25.4%	6,429	50%
Giles	15,258	21.5%	5,119	20.7%	3,157	42%
Grainger	12,250	16.4%	4,728	17.5%	2,139	34%
Greene	36,375	23.4%	11,500	17.7%	6,439	41%
Grundy	6,971	13.4%	2,902	16.0%	1,114	29%
Hamblen	32,823	23.8%	10,242	21.3%	6,985	45%
Hamilton	182,690	37.3%	32,292	24.8%	45,241	62%
Hancock	3,661	12.8%	1,544	19.6%	716	32%
Hardeman	14,832	13.9%	6,097	19.5%	2,886	33%
Hardin	13,422	16.9%	5,118	18.3%	2,454	35%
Hawkins	30,395	21.5%	10,197	20.5%	6,225	42%
Haywood	9,698	15.2%	3,856	21.3%	2,070	37%
Henderson	14,778	20.9%	5,043	22.8%	3,364	44%
Henry	16,532	20.2%	5,758	21.0%	3,478	41%
Hickman	13,488	16.6%	5,181	18.1%	2,444	35%
Houston	4,261	14.5%	1,725	20.0%	852	35%
Humphreys	9,562	18.9%	3,455	23.9%	2,288	43%
Jackson	6,243	16.7%	2,389	15.9%	994	33%
Jefferson	26,757	21.8%	8,884	22.9%	6,124	45%
Johnson	10,068	16.0%	3,926	17.5%	1,758	33%
Knox	231,215	47.0%	18,530	20.8%	48,144	68%
Lake	4,621	8.4%	2,154	19.5%	901	28%
Lauderdale	14,953	15.5%	5,903	17.1%	2,561	33%
Lawrence	21,175	19.3%	7,558	21.1%	4,474	40%
Lewis	6,230	20.4%	2,155	20.4%	1,274	41%
Lincoln	17,266	24.2%	5,312	20.0%	3,452	44%
Loudon	24,857	30.5%	6,100	22.3%	5,540	53%

**Educational Attainment by County:  
Getting to 55 Percent with Adults**

County	Total Population 25-64	Educational Attainment Rate (% with a Degree 25-64)	Additional Degrees Needed to Reach 55%	% Some College No Degree (25-64)	Population 25-64 with Some College No Degree	If every adult with some college no degree earned a credential, this would be the county's educational attainment rate
Macon	27,133	24.3%	8,331	18.9%	5,131	43%
Madison	13,431	18.4%	4,910	20.2%	2,711	39%
Marion	11,774	17.1%	4,467	17.0%	2,007	34%
Marshall	50,642	32.2%	11,522	22.4%	11,319	55%
Maury	15,153	20.2%	5,269	22.4%	3,397	43%
McMinn	16,615	21.2%	5,612	22.2%	3,682	43%
McNairy	44,415	27.3%	12,290	24.0%	10,673	51%
Meigs	6,388	13.8%	2,633	20.9%	1,336	35%
Monroe	23,541	17.7%	8,785	19.8%	4,671	38%
Montgomery	92,401	33.8%	19,575	28.7%	26,546	63%
Moore	3,248	21.5%	1,088	25.9%	842	47%
Morgan	12,473	12.8%	5,264	16.2%	2,023	29%
Obion	16,466	19.4%	5,856	23.2%	3,823	43%
Overton	11,389	17.9%	4,221	18.5%	2,112	36%
Perry	4,051	19.0%	1,458	16.6%	671	36%
Pickett	2,597	23.2%	826	24.1%	627	47%
Polk	8,872	18.6%	3,234	21.0%	1,866	40%
Putnam	35,254	29.1%	9,126	20.5%	7,234	50%
Rhea	16,376	16.9%	6,235	21.6%	3,532	38%
Roane	28,515	27.5%	7,849	22.4%	6,383	50%
Robertson	36,124	25.6%	10,636	22.6%	8,165	48%
Rutherford	142,442	37.4%	25,035	25.0%	35,639	62%
Scott	11,628	18.7%	4,220	16.2%	1,885	35%
Sequatchie	7,474	21.6%	2,495	20.3%	1,514	42%
Sevier	49,030	23.0%	15,666	24.0%	11,746	47%
Shelby	494,815	37.0%	89,185	24.6%	121,959	62%
Smith	10,379	17.8%	3,858	18.6%	1,926	36%
Stewart	6,919	20.9%	2,361	26.2%	1,810	47%
Sullivan	82,904	29.9%	20,789	22.4%	18,573	52%
Sumner	88,281	33.9%	18,588	24.9%	22,003	59%
Tipton	32,313	25.4%	9,565	26.6%	8,610	52%
Trousdale	4,171	18.6%	1,520	19.3%	807	38%
Unicoi	9,662	21.6%	3,230	18.6%	1,794	40%
Union	10,327	14.0%	4,235	14.0%	1,445	28%
Van Buren	3,018	14.4%	1,226	13.6%	410	28%
Warren	20,989	19.3%	7,483	17.4%	3,654	37%
Washington	64,946	38.3%	10,849	23.1%	14,974	61%
Wayne	9,490	15.4%	3,763	17.6%	1,674	33%
Weakley	16,538	27.5%	4,549	22.4%	3,700	50%
White	13,416	18.0%	4,961	16.5%	2,212	35%
Williamson	102,863	63.0%	(8,210)	17.8%	18,300	81%
Wilson	63,976	37.1%	11,425	21.8%	13,937	59%

Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013 five year estimates

### Tennessee’s Adult Learning Focused Institutions

The Tennessee colleges and universities listed below have completed the Adult Learning Focused Institution assessment, administered by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). They have committed time and resources to pinpointing ways to improve the way they serve adult learners.

<b>Community Colleges: Public, 2-Year</b>
Chattanooga State Community College
Cleveland State Community College
Columbia State Community College
Dyersburg State Community College
Jackson State Community College
Motlow State Community College
Nashville State Community College
Pellissippi State Community College
Roane State Community College
Southwest Tennessee Community College
Volunteer State Community College
Walters State Community College
<b>Universities: Public, 4-Year</b>
Austin Peay State University
Middle Tennessee State University
Tennessee State University
University of Memphis
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
<b>Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology</b>
TCAT Dickson
TCAT Shelbyville
<b>Private Not-for-Profit, 4-Year</b>
Baptist College of Health Sciences
Belmont University
Christian Brothers University
Lee University
Lipscomb University
Tusculum College