Rural Health Care Pathways Expansion Grant

Frequently Asked Questions

Collaborative/Grant Partnership

Can a collaborative include a combination of public, private, or non-profit postsecondary as members?

Yes, a collaborative can involve multiple postsecondary institutions. The Request for Proposal (RFP) does not set a limit on the number of partner institutions that can be included in the proposal. Collaborative partner institutions must be either Tennessee, public postsecondary institutions or members of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA).

Can public, private, or non-profit postsecondary institutions collaborate as co-primary partners?

Yes, a collaborative may involve multiple postsecondary partners. If a proposal includes more than one postsecondary institution, one institution **must** be identified as the Fiscal Agent. The Fiscal Agent will sign a grant contract with THEC and will be responsible for coordinating all grant activities, ensuring partner participation and collaboration, and managing contract monitoring, auditing, and reporting. To qualify, the institution must either be a Tennessee, public postsecondary institution or a member of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA).

Can a K-12 school system, be a partner on multiple RFPs?

Yes. A K-12 school system may be a partner on more than one grant; however, the grant submission should be coordinated so that the proposals do not duplicate efforts/programs.

Can a primary partner submit more than more application? For example, if a postsecondary institution serves two separate and distinct counties with very different workforce needs, can two separate projects be submitted for consideration?

Yes. Multiple applications by a primary partner may be submitted for consideration.

What if an organization refuses to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?

For MOUs to be considered for any points on the rubric, they must be signed by all appropriate parties**.**

What if an organization drops out of the project between submitting a Notice of Intent (NOI) and submitting the proposal?

Health care employers can be replaced by other health care employers. However, the K-12 partner must not change from what was reported on the NOI.

Should proposals include MOUs with K-12 partners?

Proposals seeking the maximum points in Section 4 of the RFP should include signed MOUs with each partner.

Is there a specific MOU template that should be used?

No, any MOU template used by your institution/systems will be sufficient.

Can additional partners be added after the NOI is submitted?

Yes, additional partners can be added after the NOI is submitted.

Grant Budget

Can equipment be purchased to enhance or expand an existing program?

Yes. Equipment may be purchased to start a new program or enhance or expand an existing program.

May salary and benefits for instructors be included in the proposal?

Yes. Salary and benefits for an instructor may be included in the proposal.

May space leases be included in the proposal?

Lease of space will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

May the proposal include renovation of space?

Renovation of space will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Who will review the space renovation requests, and do they need to be reviewed before grant submission?

THEC will review any space renovation requests during the scoring process.

May the proposal include new construction?

No, a proposal cannot include a request for new construction. Additionally, constructing an addition to an existing structure is classified as new construction for the purposes of this grant and, therefore, would not be eligible for funding.

Can grant funds be used to provide a stipend to a coordinator that is external to the lead institution for coordinating larger events like a career expo or similar event?

Yes. Stipends, as described in the question above, are allowed as part of the submission.

Can grant funds be used to reimburse WBL salaries paid by employers?

Yes, WBL salary reimbursement requests are allowed. They cannot exceed 50 percent of the salaries paid by employers to WBL participants.

Is there a required match for the purpose of this grant proposal?

No. Matching funds are not a requirement of this grant.

Can grant funds be used to provide stipends to teachers or counselors for externships?

Yes. Stipends can be used to fund externships for teachers or counselors.

Can grant funds be used for secondary teachers' salaries for teaching a special health care camp or similar activity that would be outside of the normal day? Possibly a summer camp or an after-school activity.

Yes. Salaries are an allowable expenditure for the grant.

If covering a salary, how long can the grant cover the salary?

The grant may cover program-related salaries from the contract start date through the contract termination date. The grant term will be 48 months beyond the contract start date.

Is there an opportunity for being awarded any additional funds that surpass the two million dollars?

Individual grant awards are limited to $2 million; however, collaborative partners may participate in more than one grant application.

May the grant be used to pay for students' costs associated with industry-recognized certifications?

Yes. Students' costs associated with industry-recognized certifications are allowable expenses.

Can student transportation for WBL experiences be included in the budget?

Yes. The cost of **group** transportation may be included in the budget.

The RFP requests details about the role of proposed equipment. Can you better define the difference between what is categorized as capital and non-capital equipment?

A capital item is defined as any individual item with an acquisition price of $5,000.00 or more.

Are supplies or consumables able to be purchased with RHCPE funds?

Yes, supplies and consumables are allowable expenses.

Can funds be used to pay an external coordinator's stipend, at the economic development agency, for time spent coordinating activities (ex. career fairs, job shadowing)?

Yes. However, these activities should be tied specifically to the program(s) in your proposal. Work done by an external coordinator that is not tied to a RHCPE program cannot be reimbursed with grant funds.

The "Specific Assistance to Individuals" is not showing in the Item Detail list in the RFP (pages 12 – 13). Is that where the Student Stipends and Completion Grant funding would be attributed?

When creating your budget ideas, stipends should be included under Professional Fees and completion grants will be included as Specific Assistance to Individuals.

General/Program Structure

Can the grant include activities aimed at adults or do they need to primarily be focused on K-12 students?

Both are eligible for submission. The purpose of the grant is to facilitate the development and implementation of employer-driven health care career pathways that include both K-12 local education agencies (LEAs) and higher education institutions.

What is the timeframe to get programs started?

The estimated contract start date will be August/September 2025. The grant term will last 48 months beyond the contract start date.

Can nationally recognized industry certifications be supported through this grant as part of a non-credit program or are only credit-bearing credentials allowed?

Yes. Nationally recognized industry certifications may be supported through the grant as part of a non-credit bearing program if the certification is used as a pathway or bridge into a for credit, postsecondary program.

Must Work Based Learning (WBL) experiences be paid? Also, would activities/problem-based learning brought to the classroom from the employer count as WBL?

No, WBL experiences do not have to be paid experiences. For additional information about allowable WBL experiences, please visit: https://www.tn.gov/education/educators/career-and-technical-education/work-based-learning.html.

Can we use data sources beyond those identified in the RFP?

Yes. Data sources may be used other than the ones identified in Section 2 of the RFP. If the workforce need is created from a new employer in the area that is not reflected in current data, please ensure that the employer expressly states this need as a part of the partnership MOU.

Does the proposal have to be a narrative, or can we include charts and tables?

Charts and tables may be included in the body of the grant or as an appendix. However, the body of the proposal is limited to a **maximum** of fifteen (15) pages, excluding the cover sheet, abstract, table of contents, budget, and appendices.

Can a proposal seek to support multiple programs?

Yes, but the need for each program must be demonstrated.

When you discuss a partnership with two employers--can it be an employer with numerous locations across rural areas?

No, one employer with multiple locations in rural areas would only count as one employer.

If a learner is in an eligible county, could they receive online training offered from an ineligible county (in addition to training located in the eligible county)?
Yes. However, a component (instruction, training, or clinical placement) of the grant **must** take place in an eligible county. The grant application should clearly address how the proposal will support rural health care in one of the eligible counties.

Can a partner be in an ineligible county but have clinics in eligible counties?
Yes. The instruction, training, **or** clinical placement **must** take place in an eligible county.

Can the funding be awarded to students for tuition, or can these funds only be used as "last funds" after all other financial aid?
Funds cannot be used to cover a student's tuition.

Scoring

Would the application score higher if more than one county was a partner?
No.

Will a project receive scoring preference if dealing with multiple strategies?
No.

What is an Essential Component?
Sections 1-6 of the RFP all have essential components that need to be addressed in your proposal. Essential components identify the key components required for that portion of the proposal and will be reviewed to determine which criteria have been addressed. Points will be assigned accordingly.

What are Evaluation Criteria?
Evaluation criteria establish the available points based on the thoroughness of the proposal response. For evaluation criteria with ranges, reviewers will check the box for the statement that most closely aligns with the information provided in the proposal and award a score in the stated range. Evaluation criteria with set points are awarded on whether or not they are addressed in the proposal. If the proposal satisfies the criteria, full points are awarded and if not, zero points are awarded.

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