TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY ATHENS

RHCPE GRANT GROWING RURAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
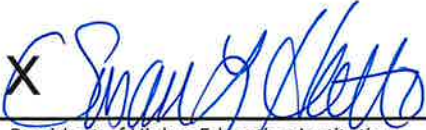TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY ATHENSIN PARTNERSHIP
WITH:

1. MCMINN COUNTY SCHOOLS, MEIGS COUNTY SCHOOLS, POLK COUNTY
SCHOOLS

2. STARR REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER, SWEETWATER HOSPITAL

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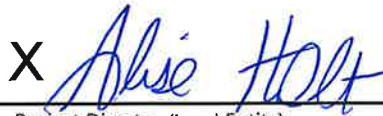423-689-1278
alise.holt@tcatathens.edu
Funding requested:
$2,000,000

X _____
President of Higher Education Institution

(Fiscal Agent)

X _____
Project Director (Lead Entity)

Abstract

TCAT Athens is proposing the Growing Rural Health Professionals to meet rural health care needs in McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, and Polk Counties. Starr Regional Medical Center and Sweetwater Hospital Association have agreed to partner on this project. Both have current and upcoming hiring needs that we will meet with this project. McMinn, Meigs, and Polk County Schools are also partners as they are excited to provide additional dual enrollment and WBL opportunities for their students. The Growing Rural Health Professionals project will increase the capacity of TCAT Athens Practical Nursing program by adding a night, part-time option to improve access for working adults. In addition, TCAT Athens will add the Patient Care Technician/Medical Assistant Program to increase health care credentials available in the community. Finally, the Patient Care Technician/Medical Assistant Bridge will be added to ensure students can easily ladder into the Practical Nursing Program. To eliminate barriers and support students, TCAT Athens will add tutoring and financial support.

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Growing Rural Health Professionals

Section 1: Program Narrative

Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Athens will utilize multiple strategies to meet local rural healthcare needs with the Growing Rural Health Professionals project. TCAT Athens is adding a Patient Care Technician/Medical Assistant (PCT/MA) program at the new campus in Polk County. The PCT/MA program will be available to students as both a full and part-time program and offer laddering credentials for Certified Nurse Aid (CNA), Phlebotomy, Electrocardiogram (EKG), Medical Assistant (MA), and Patient Care Technician (PCT). TCAT Athens also plans to expand its daytime Practical Nursing (PN) program by adding a part-time evening program.

TCAT Athens will promote the programs in the rural communities to both adult and high school students through outreach events, on-site open houses, and health science days. The local high schools have agreed to expand their dual enrollment by offering the PCT/MA pathway. In turn, this also creates a pathway to adult programs. Local high schools offer Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities but note clinical experiences are challenging to find. TCAT Athens will leverage existing relationships to support clinical opportunities for underserved schools.

Adult students will be recruited via outreach events, community partners, and their current employer to improve their skills within the health care field. Both TCAT Athens and Cleveland State Community College have adult education programs that receive rural healthcare funds for workforce development. TCAT Athens will work with both programs to recruit students and transfer their earned CNA and/or Phlebotomy credentials which will expedite their time through the PCT/MA program.

Finally, TCAT Athens plans to use this grant to eliminate student barriers to health care education. Financial aid may cover tuition but does not pay for required course-related materials or the costs of living due to missed work time while in school. Providing funds to eliminate barriers caused by course related costs like licensure exams, study materials, and scrubs will encourage more students to sign up for college with less hesitation. College Completion grants to help cover rent, car expenses, childcare, and food will help students reduce work time, so they can focus on learning but still provide for themselves and their families. These resources will increase the number of successful students enrolling in, attending and completing health care programs.

Section 2: Demonstration of Need

Both rural area hospitals that TCAT Athens serves have agreed to participate in this project. Based on last year's hires, Starr Regional predicts they will need at least 104 CNA's, 36 MA's, 4 EKG Techs, 20 Phlebotomist, and 52 LPNs over the next 4 years. Starr Regional is currently expanding with a new ICU building in Athens and Geriatric Neurology in Etowah. Sweetwater Hospital Association is working on improving turnover, but predicts they will need at least 40 CNA's, 5 EKG Techs, 10 Phlebotomists, and 10 LPNs over the next 4 years.

TCAT Athens has additional agreements, not related to this project, for clinical sites where our LPN students train. We will leverage our existing partnerships to support this project.

Table 1 includes the Growing Rural Health Professionals programs with their associated CIP to SOC codes.

Table 1: CIP Code and SOC Code Crosswalk

Program	CIP Code	SOC Code
Nurse Aid	31.51.3902.22	51.3902
Phlebotomist	31.51.1009.00	51.1009
Medical Assisting	31.51.0801	51.0801

Patient Care Technology/Medical Assisting	31.51.0807.03	51.3902
Practical Nursing	31.51.3901.00	51.3901

Projected Growth. Home health and personal care aids, nurses, and medical assistants are listed among the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook top 20 occupations with the highest projected new jobs for 2023-2033. The handbook projects 820,500 new jobs in home health and personal care aids, 197,200 new jobs in nursing, and 118,000 new medical assistant jobs.

In Tennessee, THEC's Academic Supply & Occupational Demand Report notes LPNs, MAs, and Phlebotomists are in-demand occupations. In 2021, they predicted there would be an annual opening for 200 nurses, 424 MA, and 40 phlebotomists. Transparent Tennessee (2022) data reinforced these predictions and have projected an annual growth of support occupations at 746 with practitioners/technical occupations being 426.

Increased Rural Need. When reviewing the continued local needs for MA's and Phlebotomists, Transparent Tennessee (2022) notes, the number of completers at existing educational institutions was 51 for MA/phlebotomist in southeast Tennessee. Completers were in the urban areas of Bradley and Hamilton counties, because the rural counties did not have current training opportunities. Meanwhile, the number of LPN completers was 35 with more than half of these located in Hamilton County. If the number of completers continues at the same rate, there are not enough to fill the open positions at Starr Regional and Sweetwater Hospital.

The commuting patterns for the rural counties served by TCAT Athens show a very mobile community impacting the local available workforce. Every day workers leave their rural counties for work in the larger counties. Commuter patterns from 2021 note that 58% of McMinn, 79% of Meigs, 58% of Monroe, and 83% of Polk workers leave their communities daily for jobs in larger, nearby cities (Commuter Data County, 2021). Commuting is often

caused by the higher pay rates found in urban areas. Local demand to refill vacated positions for those choosing to commute will persist as TCAT Athens educates new health care workers.

Underserved Population & Labor Force Engagement. Low income and poverty families are located in the rural counties that TCAT Athens is serving. Convenient, flexible education, where the barriers have been removed, will provide the opportunity for families to earn their way out of their current situation. Predicted growth of health care careers is a great opportunity for stable well-paying employment.

United Way provides county reports on Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families. ALICE families earn more than the poverty level, but their income does not provide household necessities. These families are often referred to as the working poor, because their wages are not enough to support their families. In 2021, ALICE families in McMinn were 28%, Meigs 25%, and Polk County 35%. When combining ALICE and poverty data, 41.6% of McMinn, 40.4% of Meigs, and 47.9% of Polk County families are struggling to survive (County Profiles, 2025).

A final variable is Labor Force Engagement. In McMinn County, 46.9% of the working age people are not working. Other counties in the area have similar data with Meigs at 53%, Monroe at 49%, and Polk at 48% (Labor Force Data, 2025). Engaging the workforce with new programming can help increase health care workers. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2024) reports Americans are seeking better opportunities in new occupations. Encouraging our disengaged, poor, and under-employed workers to investigate careers in health will be a priority of this project.

Section 3: Program Plan

TCAT Athens plans to use Growing Rural Health Professionals to increase awareness, support rural Career Technical Education (CTE) programs with dual enrollment and WBL, provide adult programming access and flexibility, assist students with cost barriers, and add new offerings emphasizing laddering credentials.

The Growing Rural Health Professionals will specifically serve McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, and Polk counties included in the college's rural service area. These opportunities will address local needs by producing skilled employees at various levels of the health care system who can fill open positions.

Dual Enrollment. TCAT Athens plans to utilize current relationships to offer health care dual enrollment, improve laddering opportunities, and help local high schools with clinical opportunities. Local dual enrollment high school students in McMinn, Meigs, and Polk counties will have the opportunity to enroll in CNA, Phlebotomy, or EKG programs based on the district's needs. The local schools have WBL opportunities built into their programs, but clinical opportunities have been limited due to the lack of health care facilities located in their counties. A dual enrollment program allows TCAT Athens to leverage clinical opportunities into Meigs and Polk counties. This increases the WBL in both counties and improves high school experience in health care careers.
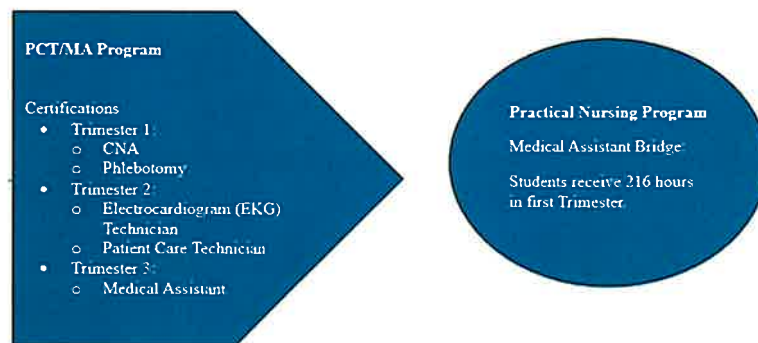
Students graduating high school with dual enrollment hours in the Phlebotomy and EKG program will spend the summer at TCAT Athens to finish their lab work and complete clinicals before taking licensure exams. Dual enrollment students can continue at TCAT Athens and work toward adding licensures or enter the local workforce where they can leverage their new credentials.

Adult Students. Adult students need access to higher education that is flexible and meets their goals. In addition, adult students with previous experience need to have this acknowledged. Students with earned credentials from local employers or local adult education can more easily enter the PCT/MA program. We will provide credit to ensure students do not need to retake coursework they already know and accelerate their education.

Patient Care Technician/Medial Assistant Program. The PCT/MA Program is built as a ladder to allow dual enrollment or adult students to earn credentials and continue learning. Figure 1 shows the certifications students can earn in the PCT/MA Program. This program will begin as a day program offered on full and part-time schedules, so that working adults can create a schedule that meets their needs.

Figure 1:

PCT/MA Program

Certifications
- Trimester 1
  - CNA
  - Phlebotomy
- Trimester 2
  - Electrocardiogram (EKG) Technician
  - Patient Care Technician
- Trimester 3
  - Medical Assistant

Practical Nursing Program

Medical Assistant Bridge

Students receive 216 hours in first Trimester

Licensed Practical Nursing Program. TCAT Athens currently offers a full-time, day LPN Program. In 2024, TCAT Athens was identified as the number one LPN program in Tennessee (Nursing Process, 2024). Each year 60 students are enrolled in the program during the fall term resulting in graduating about 54 learners at the end of the summer term. The students then take the NCLEX-PN to obtain their license.

To increase access and flexibility, TCAT Athens plans to offer a part-time evening program. Although the day program is convenient for some students, it prohibits working adults

and parents from attending in the day. Many potential students find 30 hours in our current program each week too demanding to balance work, life, and program rigor. A part-time evening program will offer working adults and parents the convenience of attending during a time when they are not working and may have additional access to childcare. While other TCATs have shared that the evening part-time nursing programs are troublesome due to completion rates and academic performance, TCAT Athens plans to leverage its adult education program to provide tutoring and testing support. Currently, TCAT Athens is also exploring hybrid opportunities to increase flexibility. The goal is to offer a flexible program that produces successful students.

In addition to the evening program, TCAT Athens will offer the Medical Assistant Bridge. The bridge allows PCT/MA graduates to enter the nursing program with 215 hours toward their first trimester. Laddering to expedite the LPN credential is very valuable in our local community.

To improve student learning, skills, and experiences TCAT Athens added a simulation manikin in spring 2023 to advance the PN program. The simulation manikin allows the students to practice skills before attending a clinical site. The Tennessee Board of Nursing permits nursing education programs to use simulation as a substitute for traditional clinical experiences, allowing up to 50% of clinical hours per course or concentration to be fulfilled through simulation. As we leverage our clinical relationships for high school WBL opportunities the simulation manikins will reduce clinical site demands of our partners.

Financial Student Supports. Although many TCAT Athens students receive financial aid, most still struggle to pay for the additional costs not covered by financial aid. These costs include scrubs, licensure review support, and licensure exam fees. To assist students, Growing Rural Health Professionals will cover these expenses to decrease the financial burden and stress.

Additionally, TCAT Athens serves many students who have living expenses that prohibit them from attending college. Rent, transportation, childcare, and food costs are barriers that force potential students to continue working instead of attending college. Students who do attend college experience financial stress and anxiety. If a current TCAT Athens student has a non-academic financial burden, financial aid has been referring them to the American Jobs Center. However, financial aid is reporting American Jobs Center is being more selective and less students are receiving support.

We plan to leverage Growing Rural Health Professionals by utilizing the Completion Grants. This part of the program will be housed in the financial aid and business office of the college, so that we can utilize the THEC guidelines and provide consistent awards of funds.

Timeline, Key Objectives, and Measurements. Below are tables identifying program activities, timeline, key objectives, and measurements.

Year 1

Program Activities	Timeline	Key Objectives	Measurements
Hire grant staff to support the project.	Q1 Fall 2025	Health Care Coordinator .5 FA Coordinator .5 Student Accounts PT Nursing Instructors	Staff are in place to complete program goals.
Develop Career Pathways with articulation agreements.	Q1 Fall 2025	Career pathways developed with local rural high schools.	Documented pathways with local schools.
Increase clinical sites across rural region to support WBL and program needs	Q1 Begins Fall 2025	New clinical sites in each rural county	Clinical sites added.
Work with local high schools to develop/increase WBL opportunities	Q1 Begins Fall 2025	Local high schools will have more robust WBL opportunities.	High School students attending WBL.
Equipment purchased to support DE programs	Q1 & 2 Fall 2025	Program equipment purchased and implemented in DE programs	Equipment is installed and ready for spring DE

Develop outreach programs to recruit ppl to health care	Q2 Fall 2025	Outreach programs developed/Improved recruitment	Outreach calendar developed with events starting in Spring 2026.
Develop marketing material to support recruitment	Q2 Fall 2025	Marketing material developed that promotes rural health care	Materials developed with events starting in Spring 2026.
Develop student Completion Grant Process for Food, Housing, Childcare, Transportation	Q2 Fall 2025	Student Completion Process will be developed before new programs start.	Stipend process ready to use for Spring 2026.
Create process for purchase of "course related supplies"	Q2 Fall 2025	Course-related supplies and costs are documented.	Process for paying for course related supplies documented for Spring 2026
Simulation units purchased	Q2 Fall 2026	Simulation units are installed before spring clinics begin.	Students use simulation during spring clinicals to practice skills.
Add part-time evening nursing program for added flexibility	Q3 Spring 2026	Evening nursing courses start.	Students are enrolled.
Completion Grant Awarded	Q3 Begins Spring 2026	Students and staff follow the process to determine needs and awards.	Students receive needed funding.
Related Course Fees are Paid	Q3 Begins Spring 2026	Students no longer pay for licensure exams, Nursing Board fees, scrubs, or test prep materials.	Students do not pay for extra required course related items.
Begin Dual Enrollment (DE) programs to reinforce pathways.	Q3 Spring 2026	New DE programs	High school DE students are enrolled.
Bridge program creation	Q3 & Q4 Spring 2026	Bridge program created for smooth transition from DE to TCAT	Enrollment in bridge program Summer 2026

Year 2

Program Activities	Timeline	Key Objectives	Measurements
Start of PCT/MA Program (students are not in a cohort & will have ongoing starts)	Q5 Fall 2026	Bridge students and new students start PCT/MA program	Students Enrolled in Program.
Continuation of DE and WBL	Ongoing	High School students have experience in health care.	Attendance in DE and WBL.

Student Stipends begin to improve student success	Ongoing	Students receive stipends	Students are retained.
Continuation of Outreach and Recruitment	Ongoing	Quarterly: Open Houses, Community Events, Partner Meetings Meetings with employers	Attendance in health care programs.

Year 3

Program Activities	Timeline	Key Objectives	Measurements
First graduates of PCT/MA Program (students are not in a cohort & will have ongoing graduates)	Q8 Summer 2027	Students pass licensure exams and find employment	Pass rates and placement rates.
Continuation of DE and WBL	Ongoing	High School students have experience in health care.	Attendance in DE and WBL.
Student Stipends begin to improve student success	Ongoing	Students receive stipends	Students are retained.
Continuation of Outreach and Recruitment	Ongoing	Quarterly: Open Houses, Community Events, Partner Meetings Meetings with employers	Attendance in health care programs.
First cohort of evening LPN students graduate	Q10 Spring 2028	Students pass NCLEX and find employment	Pass rates and placement rates
Second cohort of evening students begin	Q11 Summer 2028	Evening nursing courses start.	Students are enrolled.

Year 4

Program Activities		Key Objectives	Measurements
Continuation of DE and WBL	Ongoing	High School students have experience in health care.	Attendance in DE and WBL.
Student Stipends continue	Ongoing	Students receive stipends	Students are retained.
Continuation of Outreach and Recruitment	Ongoing	Quarterly: Open Houses, Community Events, Partner Meetings Meetings with employers	Attendance in health care programs.

Project Governance and Accountability. Growing Rural Health Professionals will be managed by TCAT Athens Director of Nursing (DON). She will be responsible for making

program decisions. Once awarded the grant, the DON will hire a Health Care Coordinator who will manage the day-to-day aspects of the grant. The DON will be supported by the TCAT Athens President to ensure compliance to State, THEC, Licensure, and TBR polices. TCAT Athens Fiscal Coordinator will ensure financial compliance with the grant.

The DON and Health Care Coordinator will utilize a steering committee consisting of staff from Starr Regional Medical Center, Sweetwater Hospital, and the local high schools who have signed the MOU included as Appendix A. TCAT Athens also has existing clinical partners throughout the rural region. Those partners will also be invited to steering committee meetings as they will be serving as clinical sites for dual enrollment and evening nurses. The Growing Rural Health Professionals steering committee will meet on the first Wednesday of the quarter.

Rural Service Area. TCAT Athens serves four rural counties which are McMinn, Meigs, Monroe, and Polk. Three of the county schools have signed the MOU and plan to expand their dual enrollment offerings to include health care programming. In addition, we have agreed to leverage our clinical partnerships for dual enrollment students, which has been a noted issue for our local high schools. To ensure there are no issues with our clinical needs, we plan to expand the simulation manikins to increase our lab capacity.

We will also be serving our adult students in the region by adding an evening nursing program to increase flexibility for the working adult. The goal will be to engage those who are under-employed by accessing our local partnerships, such as the American Jobs Center, who can connect us with those that need to up-skill. We will also be working with TCAT Athens and Cleveland State's Adult Education programs to recruit healthcare graduates with CNA and Phlebotomy credentials who can easily ladder into the PCT/MA program. Finally, we will work with our local health care employers to seek out employees who could benefit from upskilling.

We currently have a contract to do CNA training for local nursing homes. Replicating this type of relationship, where employers look at their current employees and identify those with potential to advance in the healthcare field, will be a priority.

Section 4: Strength of Partnership

The signed MOU is in Appendix A. We have three school partners and two health care organizations who have agreed to be an active participant in this grant.

Starr Regional Medical Center is in McMinn County. They have two hospitals located in Athens and Etowah. They provide hospital and emergency room services, breast health, cardiology, diabetes center, and Starr Regional Health & Rehabilitation. Starr Regional Health Center currently has multiple open positions for Medical Lab Techs, CNA's, MA's, and LPN's.

Sweetwater Hospital Association is a 59 bed, acute care, not-for-profit corporation located in Monroe County and serves 10 communities. They provide many services including hospital and emergency room care, home healthcare, cardiology, internal medicine, laboratory, labor and delivery, and radiology. There are currently multiple job openings for CNAs, Nursing Assistants, and nurses.

Local high schools participating in the grant are McMinn County, Meigs County, and Polk County. The schools plan to work with TCAT Athens to expand WBL and dual enrollment opportunities in health care.

All partners have agreed to attend the quarterly meeting, provide feedback on program activities, and support the initiative. Meanwhile, Starr Regional and Sweetwater will provide clinical sites for our students, interview graduates, and hire students who fit their organization.

Section 5: Budget Plan

The following is the narrative for the budget found in Appendix B.

Salaries. TCAT Athens plans to spend $820,000 on salaries for the Health Care Coordinator, ½ Financial Aid Support Associate, ½ Student Accounts Support Associate, and 2 part-time nursing instructors.

The Health Care Coordinator, under the supervision of the DON, will attend events to promote the project, organize open houses and tours, expand the health science day (only offered for McMinn now), work with the local high schools to further develop dual enrollment and WBL opportunities, assist with clinical relationships and curriculum development, and ensure project outcomes are met. Additionally, the coordinator will manage Growing Health Professionals' purchasing, which will include the purchase of equipment, and grocery or gas cards for students.

For the student support funds to be distributed appropriately, significant time will be needed from financial aid and student accounts. To ensure appropriate staff are available for fund distribution, grant funds will be used to support a .5 Financial Aid Support Associate, and a .5 Student Accounts Support Associate. The Financial Aid Support Associate will ensure all proper documentation has been completed and other funding sources have been exhausted before any Completion Grants are awarded. The Student Accounts Support Associate will place proper funding amounts on the student's account or pay housing and childcare providers directly. The college will support the other .5 of their full-time employment through college funds to assist non-health care students.

The evening nursing program will be supported via this grant by financing the equivalent of two part-time instructors. Due to clinical requirements, one part-time instructor cannot cover more than 10 students. A class of 24 PN students will need three instructors. Multiple instructors will only be utilized when necessary for clinical hours. Therefore, the funding amount is equivalent to two 20-hours per week instructors.

Although the PCT/MA program is also a new program for TCAT Athens, we plan to support the instructor through our college funds.

Supplies and Printing & Publications. TCAT Athens will not charge the grant for occupancy for any of the staff or programs offered, because of this grant. The costs in this line item are focused on supplies and printing & publications. The college plans to spend $10,000 on supplies, including copies, office needs, and consumables, each year for the evening nursing program and staff. A key component of this grant will be recruiting students to the new PCT/MA and evening nursing programs, emphasizing health care pathways, which will result in the publication and printing of materials. TCAT Athens is planning on spending $20,000 per year on recruitment materials to be used at outreach events, open houses, and high schools.

Specific Assistance to Individuals. A significant portion of the grant are stipends for course-related materials, licensure exams, and Completion Grants. The college plans to allocate $735,000 to be used to support students and help potential students overcome financial barriers caused by costs not paid for through financial aid.

Each year, there will be 25 PCT/MA students, 60 day nursing students, 24 evening nursing students, and 60 dual enrollment students accessing these funds. Per year, licensure exams are expected to cost around $36,000; scrubs for adult students are $10,000; and testing prep material for NCLEX is about $21,000/year.

We are estimating $50,000 in year 1, and $130,000 in years 2-4 for Completion Grants. At $625 per Completion Grant, we can award 80 in year 1 or 26 per trimester and 208 in year 2-4 or 69 per trimester.

Travel. The Health Care Coordinator and related program staff will need to travel between the campuses, to high schools, and community events.

Capital Purchases. To support the grant, equipment must be purchased. The dual enrollment programs need EKG machines and blood draw arms to support the EKG and Phlebotomy programs. Even though the EKG and Phlebotomy dual enrollment students will continue their program at TCAT Athens until they finish their clinicals, it is important they practice while at high school. EKG and Phlebotomy equipment are expected to cost $25,000 per high school.

TCAT Athens plans to share clinical sites with the high school dual enrollment students and WBL opportunities, which means adding clinical opportunities on the campus. TCAT Athens plans to purchase two additional simulation manikins for a total of $125,000.

As the curriculum becomes more digital, TCAT Athens needs to support learnings by providing computers. TCAT Athens plans to purchase 90 laptops to be used by students in the program for lectures, note taking, and tests. Three of the computers will be assigned to staff to perform their work duties. TCAT Athens is allocating $80,000 for computers.

Section 6: Sustainability

TCAT Athens intends to use the funding from this grant to begin the evening PN program, support the PCT/MA program, and assist with equipment to expand opportunities. We expect the enrollment in these programs to remain consistent, allowing for TCAT Athens to continue the programs without further financial support. The grant will be used to hire staff to support the new programs. At the completion of the Growing Rural Health Professionals project, all staff will become part of the TCAT Athens budget. We will support the staff with the new program enrollment.

Once the support for student funding ends, TCAT Athens will work with the American Jobs Center and other funding sources to subsidize student expenses.

References

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Transparent Tennessee (2022). https://www.tn.gov/transparenttn/state-financial-overview/open-ecd/openecd/tnecd-performance-metrics/workforce/leap-in-demand-occupations-report.html

APPENDIX A: MOU Agreement

AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY ATHENS
AND
EMPLOYER PARTICIPANTS
AND
EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

This Agreement entered into this 24th day of January, 2025 by and between Tennessee College of Applied Technology Athens (hereinafter referred to as the "College") and Starr Regional Medical Center and Sweetwater Hospital Association, (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "Employer Participants") and McMinn County Schools, Meigs County Schools, and Polk County Schools (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "Educational Participants"), is for the purpose of implementing the Rural Health Care Pathways Expansion Grant (RHCPE) Proposal, as further defined below.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Agreement is to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each party as they relate to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's (THEC) Rural Health Care Pathways Expansion Grant (RHCPE) proposal to implement the RHCPE program in the College's rural service areas. In particular, the Agreement is intended to establish expectations between the designated employer participants and the education participants to provide youth the opportunity to gain valuable vocational skills to address the labor shortage and skill deficits in the rural health care sector.

I. ROLES

1. **COLLEGE ROLE:**

   The College agrees to the following responsibilities:
   - Serve as the fiscal agent of the grant
   - Coordinate dual enrollment and/or dual credit with identified Educational Participants
   - Deliver health career educational opportunities to employees and students of the Educational Participants
   - Coordinate work-based learning opportunities required by employers for students to work for Employer Participants upon completion of the respective program
   - Create a Practical Nursing program in a rural county
   - Create a Surgical Technology program in a rural county
   - Lead the initiative to create a new state-wide articulation agreement for Surgical Technology

2. **EMPLOYER PARTICIPANTS:**

The Employer Participants are responsible for supporting the mission of the RHCPE. Employer participants agree to the following responsibilities:

- Alerting the College of job openings
- Development of youth interest in health careers
- Host tours for youth and adult program participants (no more than one per year per participant)
- Participate in school career exploration events (no more than one per year per participant)
- Consider graduates for employment
- Serve on occupational advisory boards upon request, and attend requested meetings

The Employer Participants agree that there is a need for these programs in their rural communities because of a lack of qualified candidates in health careers in their local geographic area. The benefits include an increased skilled pipeline to their organization and an overall benefit to the rural communities they serve by providing increased access to quality health care.

3. **EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS:**

Education Participants agree to the following responsibilities:

- Recruiting students to enroll in Health Career Pathways

- Providing students with WBL (Work-Based Learning) opportunities by engaging students and employers in meaningful activities

- Managing dual enrollment/dual credit with the College

- Providing students the opportunity to obtain industry credentials, including underrepresented groups of students (economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, students in foster care; and students with parents that are in the armed forces or on active duty) as well as non-traditional

- Monitor Employer Participant engagement

The Education Participants agree that there is a need for these programs in their rural communities because of a lack of overall awareness and access in secondary students regarding health careers in their local geographic

area. The benefits include a potentially increased employment rate and income for the rural communities they serve and providing increased access to quality health care.

II. MISCELLANEOUS:

1. Modification of roles/responsibilities and the sustainability of the program are collectively decided by the parties.

2. An Employer Participant or Educational Participant may terminate its relationship with the program at the end of an academic term with a 30-day written notice to the College.

3. Employer Participants and Educational Participants and may be added through written Amendment to this Agreement.

4. <u>Term</u>. The term of this Agreement shall be <u>July 1, 2025</u> through <u>June 30, 2029</u>.

5. <u>Counterparts</u>. This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which together shall be deemed to be original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument. In the event that any signature is delivered by facsimile transmission or by e-mail delivery of a ".pdf" format data file, such signature shall create a valid and binding obligation of the party executing (or on whose behalf such signature is executed) with the same force and effect as if such a facsimile or ".pdf" signature page was an original thereof.

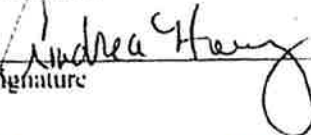| COLLEGE:	EMPLOYER PARTICIPANT:
TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY ATHENS	STAR REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
[signature] Signature	*[signature]* Signature
Susan Hatto, President Name and Title	John R McLain CEO Name and Title
1/30/2025 Date	1/24/2025 Date

EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPANT:	EMPLOYER PARTICIPANT:
MCMINN COUNTY SCHOOLS	SWEETWATER HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
Lee Parkison (signature)	*Andrea Henry* (signature)
Signature	Signature
LEE PARKISON DIRECTOR of Schools	Andrea Henry, CEO
Name and Title	Name and Title
01/29/25	1-27-2025
Date	Date

EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPANT:	EMPLOYER PARTICIPANT:
MEIGS COUNTY SCHOOLS	
Keri Fitch (signature)	
Signature	Signature
Keri Fitch, CTE Director	
Name and Title	Name and Title
1/28/2025	
Date	Date

EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPANT:	EMPLOYER PARTICIPANT:
POLK COUNTY SCHOOLS	
Ryan Goodman (signature)	
Signature	Signature
Ryan Goodman, CTE Supervisor	
Name and Title	Name and Title
1-27-2025	
Date	Date

APPENDIX B: BUDGET

GRANT BUDGET			
Rural Health Care Pathways Expansion Grant: Growing Rural Health Professionals			
The grant budget line-item amounts below shall be applicable only to expense incurred during the following **Applicable** **Period:** **BEGIN: August 2025** **END: August 2029**			
POLICY 03 Object Line-item Reference	**EXPENSE OBJECT LINE-ITEM CATEGORY** [1]	**GRANT CONTRACT**	**GRANTEE PARTICIPATION**	**TOTAL PROJECT**
1, 2	Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	865,000	85,000	950,000
4, 15	Professional Fee, Grant & Award [2]	0.00	0.00	0.00
5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Supplies, Telephone, Postage & Shipping, Occupancy, Equipment Rental & Maintenance, Printing & Publications	120,000	0.00	120,000
11, 12	Travel, Conferences & Meetings	20,000	0.00	20,000
13	Interest [2]	0.00	0.00	0.00
14	Insurance	0.00	0.00	0.00
16	Specific Assistance To Individuals	735,000	0.00	735,000
17	Depreciation [2]	0.00	0.00	0.00
18	Other Non-Personnel [2]	0.00	0.00	0.00
20	Capital Purchase [2]	280,000	0.00	280,000
22	Indirect Cost	0.00	0.00	0.00
24	In-Kind Expense	0.00	0.00	0.00
25	**GRAND TOTAL**	**2,000,000**	**0.00**	**2,085,000**

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[1] Each expense object line-item shall be defined by the Department of Finance and Administration Policy 03, *Uniform Reporting Requirements and Cost Allocation Plans for Subrecipients of Federal and State Grant Monies, Appendix A.* (posted on the Internet at: https://www.tn.gov/finance/looking-for-policies.html).

[2] Applicable detail follows this page if line-item is funded.