EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

The LPN Pathway

East Tennessee State University IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

1. Tennessee College of Applied Technology Elizabethton
   Tennessee College of Applied Technology Morristown

2. Greene County Schools
   Hawkins County Schools
   Johnson County Schools

3. Hospitals operated by the Ballad Health System
   East Tennessee State University Health

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$1,999,999

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Date: 2025.01.30

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Project Director

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**Abstract**

The LPN Pathway is a collaborative initiative led by East Tennessee State University in partnership with Ballad Health, local school districts, and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs). This initiative aims to address critical healthcare workforce shortages in three rural counties in Northeast Tennessee (Greene, Hawkins, and Johnson) by integrating career pathways, work-based learning (WBL) experiences, and financial support for students.

The LPN pathway will develop structured articulation agreements between K-12 schools, TCATs, and ETSU to create a seamless transition from high school to Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certification and an accelerated pathway to the LPN credential. Participating students will complete pre-LPN coursework via dual enrollment, reducing the LPN training timeline from three to two trimesters post-graduation. The program will provide access to high quality simulation labs, hospital internships, and mentorship from Ballad Health nursing professionals to cultivate employability skills.

Financial barriers will be addressed through student stipends, covering tuition and fees, transportation, certification exams, and essential medical supplies, ensuring equitable access. Over the four-year grant period, the program anticipates enrolling 60-90 students, providing 432 of the 1296 clock hours needed for the LPN certification.

By aligning education with regional workforce demands, the LPN Pathway will equip students with the credentials and experience necessary for immediate employment as CNAs, or continued education toward LPN, RN, or BSN. This initiative serves as a scalable model for addressing healthcare workforce shortages in rural areas, fostering sustainable economic and community development in Northeast Tennessee.

**The LPN Pathway**

**Section 1: Program Narrative**: East Tennessee State University (ETSU), in partnership with Ballad Health, local school districts and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT), proposes the creation of the LPN Pathway to address critical healthcare workforce shortages in three rural counties in Northeast Tennessee (NETN): Greene, Hawkins, and Johnson. The proposed comprehensive approach integrates three strategies: (1) developing a career pathway program with documented articulation agreements between the K-12 schools, local TCATs, and ETSU, (2) implementing collaborative work-based learning (WBL) experiences, and (3) providing financial support for students.

**Strategy #1: Career pathways:** The LPN Pathway will establish educational training sites within each county, where high school students can complete pre-LPN (Licensed Practical Nursing) coursework through dual enrollment offered by the local TCATs leading to certification as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and an accelerated pathway to completion of LPN certification. Upon successful completion of dual enrollment course requirements and graduation from high school, students could then enroll at the local TCAT and complete their LPN certification in two trimesters (reduced from three). This accelerated pathway will allow students to enter the workforce as LPNs at a faster pace or continue their education toward becoming Registered Nurses (RNs) or earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) or other advanced healthcare credentials.

This proposal builds on a similar program established by Ballad Health through a Bloomberg Philanthropies grant, which focuses on creating LPN career pathways in urban school systems in NETN (e.g., Greeneville City Schools, Kingsport City Schools, Bristol City Schools). Our proposal specifically addresses the needs of rural high schools and communities

by leveraging Ballad Health's experience and infrastructure as well as existing infrastructure of TCATs to offer dual enrollment. Training sites will be equipped with medical equipment and supplies to support the LPN pathway. Proposed locations include a decommissioned wing of Hawkins County Hospital, South Greene High School until the completion of TCAT Greeneville in 2026, and Johnson County High School. ***Expected Outcomes***: The strategy is to develop documented articulation agreements with TCAT Elizabethton for Johnson County and TCAT Morristown for Hawkins and Greene Counties. Collaborating with Career and Technical Education (CTE) directors, we anticipate enrolling 10-15 students per site annually. Over four years, we project that 60-90 students will have achieved their CNA certification and completed 432 of 1296 clock hours needed for the LPN certification. For students interested in pursuing the LPN certification after graduation, they will be supported in preparing for the HESI admissions exam, allowing a smooth transition into the TCAT LPN program.

**Strategy #2: WBL:** This proposal includes several WBL opportunities to develop employability skills that prepare students for success in postsecondary education and future careers in nursing (TN Department of Education, n.d.). As part of the curriculum, students will engage in simulation-based learning at Ballad Health hospitals or training sites equipped with grant-funded nursing labs. These labs will feature manikins and advanced simulation equipment to mimic real-world healthcare scenarios. In addition, students will participate in at least 40 hours of structured internships at local hospitals, providing students with real-life exposure to patient care. This LPN pathway will also offer students opportunities to receive ongoing mentorship from Ballad Health nursing professionals. This mentorship component will (a) provide students with guidance on career development; (b) offer advice on navigating postsecondary education and credentialing pathways; and (c) help students build professional

networks in the healthcare industry. ***Expected Outcomes*:** Students will complete the 36 clinical hours for CNA certification and 432 hours towards the LPN certification, gaining the confidence and competence required for certification exams and future employment.

**Strategy #3: Student stipends:** The proposal incorporates comprehensive support, including student stipends to cover essential costs such as tuition, fees, textbooks, transportation, and other education-related expenses like certification exams, immunizations, and medical supplies. This financial assistance ensures all eligible participants can participate, especially those from underserved rural communities. ***Expected Outcomes:*** Equitable access to the program will empower underserved students to pursue healthcare careers.

**Counties Served:** The proposed LPN Academy will serve three rural counties in NETN—Greene, Hawkins, and Johnson Counties—each facing unique challenges in education and workforce development. Together, these counties encompass seven high schools, with student enrollment numbers highlighting the varying scale of the educational landscape (See Table 1 in Appendix) All three counties face critical shortages in healthcare professionals, including LPNs and RNs, exacerbated by an aging workforce and increasing demand for medical services in rural areas (TN Department of Labor, 2022). These shortages are particularly acute in community hospitals, long-term care facilities, and home health services, where vacancies often go unfilled due to a lack of qualified candidates. Current CTE strategies aim to address these shortages by offering health sciences pathways in high schools (TN Department of Education, 2020). However, these programs are often underutilized due to limited access to clinical training sites, a lack of resources such as simulation labs, and insufficient guidance for students interested in pursuing healthcare careers (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2022).

Students in these rural counties face numerous barriers to accessing career pathways in healthcare, such as geographic isolation, limited transportation options to TCATs, economic challenges (Coughlin et al., 2019), and lack of awareness of healthcare opportunities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). The proposed project addresses these challenges by creating an accessible, locally available pathway, providing financial support for education-related costs, and integrating meaningful WBL experiences to prepare students for healthcare careers. **Expected Outcomes:** The initiative will address workforce shortages by equipping rural students with the skills, certifications, and support needed to pursue careers in healthcare. By aligning education with workforce needs, the LPN Pathway will strengthen rural healthcare systems and provide a replicable model for addressing critical workforce shortages.

**Section 2: Demonstration of Need:** The proposed project addresses critical healthcare workforce shortages in Greene, Hawkins, and Johnson Counties.

**Comprehensive Labor Market Justification:** The healthcare sector is poised for significant growth nationally and in TN (Global Health, 2022). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that jobs for LPNs will grow by 3%, and jobs for RNs will grow by 6% from 2023 to 2033, resulting in over 248,500 annual job openings nationwide (BLS, 2025). Locally, data from Jobs4TN reveals acute shortages, with 23 LPN openings in Greene County, 9 in Hawkins County, and 9 in Johnson County, alongside a higher demand for RNs (Jobs4TN, 2025).

At the state level, healthcare is projected to become TN's largest industry by 2030, with a 63,500-job increase (THEC & TSAC, 2024). While the state had an LPN supply of 22,500 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in 2021, exceeding the demand of 15,000 FTEs, projections suggest that this surplus will decline to a 105% adequacy level by 2035 (TN Hospital Association, 2023). This trend underscores the need for sustained efforts to train and retain skilled LPNs and RNs.

Additionally, TN ranks fifth in the Southeast for its aging population, further driving demand for healthcare services (THEC & TSAC, 2024).

RN remains one of the top occupations for job growth. Between 2014 and 2024, the RN workforce is expected to grow by 16%, with over 1.09 million job openings anticipated due to growth and retirements (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2024). However, only 5% of RNs currently hold baccalaureate or graduate degrees, falling short of the Institute of Medicine's recommendation to increase BSNs to 80% (AACN, 2024).

**Industry-Specific Data from Local Employers:** Local healthcare employers, particularly Ballad Health, report significant workforce shortages. Ballad Health faces a 40% vacancy rate among licensed nursing positions, equating to over 1,200 unfilled full-time roles (Ballad Health, 2023). This shortage has compelled the organization to rely on temporary solutions, such as contract labor and international hires. While the Local Health Departments are reclassifying LPN positions to RN positions as current LPN's vacate the positions, they indicate a need for LPNs at the local hospitals and nursing homes (personal communication Kathy Snyder, the Regional Director of Nursing for the Northeast Region, January 25, 2025).

**Socioeconomic Challenges and Barriers:** NETN faces substantial socioeconomic challenges. The region's median household income was $9,349 below the national average in 2021, with over 17% of the population living in poverty (TN Department of Health, n.d.; Appalachian Regional Commission [ARC], 2020). These disparities are particularly acute in rural counties, where geographic isolation, limited transportation options, and financial barriers hinder students' access to healthcare training programs.

**Existing Programs, Unmet Needs, and Proposed Solutions:** While the TCATS offer the pre-LPN curriculum, all high schools in Greene, Hawkins, and Johnson County are not

currently leveraging this opportunity for dual enrollment to accelerate the pathway to LPN for interested students and addressing the workforce need. Additionally, these rural communities face challenges such as inadequate clinical placement sites, high costs for certifications, and insufficient career guidance. The LPN Pathway addresses these gaps through these strategies:

- Dual Enrollment Opportunities towards becoming a CNA or LPN.

- Advanced Simulation Labs with medical manikins and modern equipment

- Financial Support: Stipends will cover tuition, transportation, and other expenses

- Mentorship and internships through partnerships with Ballad Health.

**Alignment of Academic Pathways and Workforce Needs:** The program establishes clear pathways for CNA, LPN, and RN training, with a robust alignment between educational credentials and workforce needs verified through the CIP-to-SOC crosswalk. For instance, CIP 51.3901 (Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training) corresponds directly to SOC 29-2061 (Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses), as shown in Table 2 (see Appendix). The alignment between credential completion and relevant occupations underscores healthcare's distinction as one of the most direct fields for translating education into employment. In this framework, the RN credential connects to roles in both postsecondary teaching and registered nursing, while the LPN credential prepares students for practical nursing roles. Additionally, the nursing assistant credential links to positions as nursing assistants, LPNs, and licensed vocational nurses. These alignments ensure proposed academic programs meet local and state workforce needs, preparing students for in-demand careers, addressing skill gaps in the healthcare sector.

**Proposed WBL Opportunities and Equipment:** The LPN Pathway incorporates robust WBL experiences, including simulation-based training, internships, and mentorship. Internships will prepare students for industry standards. Grant funding will support the renovation of spaces

to create lab space for coursework and WBL experiences in each of the three school districts, and the acquisition of simulation equipment, nursing lab supplies, and digital tools.

**Section 3: Program Plan:** The LPN Pathway addresses critical healthcare workforce shortages in rural Northeast TN by developing a seamless high school-to-postsecondary education and/or workforce pipeline that leads to high-demand credentials and sustainable careers in nursing. Students will complete 432 clock hours applicable toward an LPN program at a local TCAT.  Upon graduation from high school, students on this pathway can continue their education and complete their LPN certification in two additional trimesters at a local TCAT. Students completing this pathway will be guaranteed an interview for employment at Ballad Health or they can choose to continue their education pursuing certification as a RN and BSN.

ETSU will work with TCATs and high schools to establish clear articulation agreements that ensure pre-LPN coursework through dual enrollment counts toward further nursing education at local TCATs and/or ETSU. ETSU will also collaborate with TCATs and local school districts to identify high school students interested in healthcare careers and support their early enrollment in this pathway. ETSU will assist TCATs in securing internships for dual-enrolled LPN students by leveraging its partnership with Ballad and their facilities in the rural healthcare settings. Internships will be overseen by a nurse educator at each of the three training sites. This model ensures graduates possess hands-on clinical experience, technical proficiency, and the soft skills necessary for patient care and team collaboration. By removing financial and logistical barriers for students, the pathway provides equitable access to high-wage, high-demand careers in healthcare, ultimately improving health outcomes and economic stability in NETN.

**Project Timeline and Overview:** The LPN Pathway will follow the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN, 2021) framework, progressing through four key

stages: Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, and Full Implementation. This structured approach ensures that program activities are systematically planned, executed, evaluated, and scaled to achieve long-term sustainability and positive outcomes. See Table 4 in Appendix for an outline of activities per phase and proposed milestones.

During the Exploration Phase (Year 1, Q1-Q2), the focus is on building a strong foundation by forming governance structures and securing key partnerships. The Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from school districts, Ballad Health, postsecondary institutions, and community partners, will be established to guide decision-making and ensure stakeholder alignment. High schools, TCATs, and clinical sites will be assessed for readiness, and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) will formalize partnerships. Metrics include the number of MOUs signed, stakeholder sessions held, and readiness assessments completed.

In the Installation Phase (Year 1, Q3-Q4), the Nurse Educators and Pathway Advisor will be recruited. Infrastructure will be built by equipping high schools and training sites with instructional and clinical materials. Concurrently, a student recruitment strategy will be launched, with targeted outreach to underserved populations. Professional development sessions will be conducted to train educators on the program's curriculum and hybrid instruction model. Progress will be tracked through metrics such as the percentage of staff positions filled, infrastructure readiness, and the number of students recruited and enrolled in the first cohort.

The Initial Implementation Phase (Years 2-3) will focus on delivering the program components and refining them based on feedback. Dual enrollment courses and internships will be launched, with wrap-around support services to ensure student retention and success. Data collection processes will be established to track key student outcomes, including academic performance, certification attainment, and support service utilization. Recruitment for subsequent

cohorts will begin during this phase. Metrics include the percentage of students retained, dual enrollment course completion rates, and pre-LPN clock hours earned. Continuous improvement will be ensured by using collected data to refine curriculum and support services.

In the Full Implementation Phase (Year 3-4), the program will expand its reach by increasing student enrollment. Efforts will be made to strengthen postsecondary pathways by formalizing articulation agreements to ensure pre-LPN coursework completed through dual enrollment counts toward further nursing education at TCATs, and ETSU (e.g., RN or a BSN). Sustainability becomes a critical focus, with engagement from policymakers, local leaders, regional employers, and philanthropic partners to secure long-term funding, including state appropriations, grant opportunities, and private sector investments. A dedicated advisory board will oversee the long-term strategic direction, monitor key outcomes, and advocate for continued investment in healthcare workforce development in rural areas.

A comprehensive evaluation of program impact will be conducted, measuring key outcomes, such as number of dual enrollment clock hours gained, graduate employment rates (in CNA positions), job retention at Ballad Health or other local healthcare providers, number of students continuing education at local TCATs post-graduation for LPN, and enrollment at ETSU pursuing RN or BSN. Success metrics for this phase will include the number of students enrolled annually, the number of graduates employed or pursuing further education, and the amount of funding secured for sustainability. See Table 3 in Appendix for a Key Metrics Summary.

Overall, this implementation framework ensures a strategic and systematic approach to addressing healthcare workforce shortages in NETN. Through this framework, ETSU, TCATs, Local School Districts, Ballad Health, and other partners can effectively develop, scale, and

sustain a program that not only produces a pipeline of credentialed healthcare professionals but also serves as a model for other rural regions facing similar challenges.

**Project Governance and Accountability:** The governance structure begins with the Project Director (PD), Dr. Laura Higgs Kappel, who will oversee all aspects of project execution, ensuring adherence to the established timeline, budget, and deliverables. The PD and Co-PD (Dr. Webb) at ETSU will provide leadership, guide research and evaluations, and ensure alignment with institutional goals. The PD will take overall responsibility for project outcomes, while the Co-PD will help manage evaluation design, data collection, and stakeholder engagement.

The Steering Committee will consist of the PD, Co-PD, and representatives from Ballad Health, who will provide expertise in healthcare systems, regional health needs, and community partnerships. Additional members will include institutional representatives and community leaders to ensure diverse perspectives in decision-making. The Steering Committee will have oversight responsibilities, including reviewing progress, addressing strategic concerns, and approving major project decisions. Decisions will follow a collaborative process and will be documented in meeting minutes to ensure transparency and accountability.

The project's meeting structure ensures effective governance and responsiveness through a tiered approach. Steering Committee meetings, held quarterly, focus on reviewing progress, addressing strategic concerns, and providing overarching guidance. Project team meetings, conducted bi-weekly, prioritize operational tasks and immediate project needs. Additionally, ad hoc meetings will be convened as needed to address urgent or unforeseen issues to ensure the team remains adaptive and proactive throughout the project lifecycle.

The PD will ensure accountability by preparing comprehensive progress reports for both the Steering Committee and the funding agency. These reports will provide detailed summaries

of completed activities, tracked milestones, budget updates with justifications for any adjustments, identified risks with corresponding mitigation strategies, and plans for the next reporting period. Success will be measured by adherence to project timelines, achievement of deliverables, and stakeholder satisfaction. This governance and accountability plan establishes a robust, transparent, and collaborative framework for project management.

**Counties Served:** The proposed Pathway serves as a timely and impactful solution to address both longstanding challenges and recent disruptions in Greene, Hawkins, and Johnson Counties, including the lingering effects of Hurricane Helene. The hurricane caused significant damage to infrastructure, healthcare facilities, and community resources, particularly in Johnson County, exacerbating existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Many families in the region continue to face barriers to accessing healthcare and stable employment, further highlighting the need for targeted workforce development initiatives like The LPN Pathway.

In Johnson County, which was among the areas most affected by Hurricane Helene, The LPN Pathway offers a path to recovery by creating opportunities for students to enter high-demand healthcare careers. The establishment of a training site at Johnson County High School will reduce geographic and financial barriers for students in a county where high poverty rates and limited transportation options were worsened by the storm's impact.

In Greene and Hawkins Counties, the LPN Pathway will also play a critical role in addressing healthcare workforce shortages exacerbated by the storm. The increased demand for healthcare services and support workers following Hurricane Helene underscored the importance of a robust and sustainable local healthcare workforce. By equipping students with CNA certifications and a path toward LPN completion, the program ensures that communities in these counties have access to skilled professionals who can respond to ongoing public health needs.

**Section 4: Strength of Partnership:** The success of the proposed LPN Pathway is grounded in the collaborative efforts of ETSU, Ballad Health, Greene County Schools, Hawkins County Schools, Johnson County Schools, and TCAT Elizabethton and TCAT Morristown (see attached MOU). Each partner plays a vital role in ensuring the program's effective implementation, sustainability, and impact on healthcare workforce development in the region.

ETSU will serve as the fiscal sponsor of the program and oversee critical administrative, strategic, and operational tasks to ensure its success. The roles for ETSU will include convening a regional planning team of stakeholders to guide the program's launch and to set, measure, and track budgeting, program outcomes, and goals; evaluate training and internship sites; facilitate recruitment and enrollment efforts; lead sustainability planning; and provide regular updates to partners on budgets, outcomes, and milestones achieved. By leading these activities, ETSU strengthens regional leadership in healthcare workforce development, fosters institutional collaboration, and enhances community engagement.

Ballad Health will dedicate time and resources, including a full-time Program Director and administrative staff, to manage the project effectively. Ballad Health will hire and manage the nurse educators and pathway advisor, collaborate with TCAT partners, work with school districts to design and implement WBL opportunities, and participate in sustainability planning. The organization will prioritize interviews for completers who want to work as a CNAs and for students who complete their LPN post-graduation-who meet hiring expectations, offering them full-time employment opportunities when eligible.

Greene County Schools, Hawkins County Schools, and Johnson County Schools will enhance student access to healthcare career pathways and promote postsecondary and workforce readiness. These districts will provide faculty and space for both in-person and virtual learning,

support student enrollment through marketing and recruitment, and collaborate with ETSU, TCATs, and Ballad Health to address student needs such as retention and career counseling. The districts will also collect and report student data to support program evaluation and improvement.

TCAT Elizabethton and TCAT Morristown will strengthen partnerships with local schools and healthcare providers to expand enrollment in healthcare programs. These institutions will offer Pre-LPN dual enrollment courses to the local school districts and work in collaboration with Ballad Health and ETSU, ensuring timely credential completion. TCATs will also offer seamless enrollment for students pursuing advanced healthcare credentials and will partner with ETSU and Ballad Health to address student retention and career counseling needs. TCATs will collect and report student data to fulfill program evaluation and reporting requirements. These partnerships will form a support system that aligns educational pathways with workforce needs. This collaboration addresses critical nursing shortages in the region and enhances opportunities for students to succeed in healthcare careers, creating lasting economic and community benefits.

**Section 5: Budget Plan.** The budget supports a structured career pathway, WBL, and financial assistance for students in Greene, Hawkins, and Johnson counties.

***Personnel Costs ($72,758 total over four years).*** Laura Kappel (10% FTE, Years 1-4) – Project Director: Oversees implementation, TCAT coordination, articulation agreements, and student guidance. Melessia Webb (5% FTE, Years 1-4) – Co-Project Director: Ensures program fidelity and stakeholder engagement.

***Non-Personnel Costs ($642,607 total over four years).*** *Alteration & Renovations* (Year 1: $84,000) – Repurposing space at Hawkins County Hospital, South Greene High School, and Johnson County High School into training sites. *Computer Services* (Year 2: $50,000) – Chromebooks and carrying cases for 50 students ($1,000 per set). *Consultant Services* ($18,000

total) – $300 stipends for 15 steering committee members annually. *Capacity Building* ($20,000 total) – Professional development, materials, and meeting expenses for staff, TCAT personnel, and educators. *Participant Stipends* ($305,000 total, Years 2-4) – Covers tuition, fees, and dual enrollment costs beyond state grants. *Participant Travel* ($149,580 total, Years 2-4) – School bus transportation ($554 per student) for 30-45 students in Year 1 and 60-90 in Years 2-4. *Marketing & Recruitment* ($19,500 total, Years 1-3) – Outreach focused on underserved communities. *Travel-Domestic* ($20,562 total, Years 1-4) – Supports travel for assessment sites, data collection, and committee meetings. *Subawards* ($1,187,469 total over four years) Ballad Health: Year 1 ($357,250), Year 2 ($262,718), Year 3 ($293,350), Year 4 ($274,151). Supports nurse educators, pathway advisors, simulation lab operations, and clinical training oversight. *Equipment* ($240,000 total) Simulation Equipment ($150,000) – High-fidelity patient simulators, IV trainers, wound care models, and CPR manikins. *Training Lab Setup* ($90,000) – Nursing beds, medical carts, and diagnostic tools for clinical training spaces. *Professional Development ($25,000 annually)* Funds training for nurse educators and pathway advisors to maintain credentials and stay updated on best practices. *Indirect Costs* ($28,366 total, 8%) Covers administrative expenses, including budget management, compliance, reporting, facilities maintenance, IT support, and data collection for program sustainability.

**Section 6: Sustainability:** The program's long-term financial sustainability will be secured through diverse funding sources, including state and local appropriations, federal and private grants, and philanthropic contributions. Targeted efforts will establish an endowment fund, while partnerships with Ballad Health and other regional employers will provide sponsorships, tuition assistance, and clinical equipment donations. Expanding collaborations with public, private, and nonprofit entities will further diversify financial support.

Operational sustainability will be ensured through a permanent advisory board transitioning from the existing Steering Committee. This board, comprising representatives from ETSU, Ballad Health, TCATs, local school districts, and community leaders, will oversee strategic planning, monitor outcomes, guide program improvements, and expand partnerships. Key staff, including the pathway advisor and nurse educator, will be integrated into ETSU and Ballad Health's operational structures for continuity. Professional development will be supported through a structured learning framework led by ETSU's Center for Rural Education and Development, offering annual workshops, training sessions, and collaborative learning communities for high school educators, postsecondary faculty, and clinical instructors. Equipment maintenance will be sustained through a dedicated maintenance fund jointly supported by ETSU and Ballad Health. Annual vendor contracts and on-site technical support from ETSU and TCATs will ensure regular maintenance, troubleshooting, and repairs. A depreciation schedule will guide equipment upgrades and replacements.

Sustainable WBL opportunities will be maintained through ongoing industry partnerships. Ballad Health will remain the primary clinical partner, providing training sites, mentorship, and employment pathways. Additional partnerships with regional healthcare providers, including nursing homes and specialty clinics, will expand WBL opportunities. Community engagement will be a key sustainability strategy, led by ETSU's Center for Rural Education and Development. Efforts will include community forums, stakeholder meetings, and outreach campaigns to highlight program impact and secure support. Through diversified funding, strong governance, and strategic partnerships, this program will address critical healthcare workforce shortages while sustaining high-quality education, training, and career pathways, ensuring a lasting impact on rural Northeast Tennessee.

**Budget**

| | GRANT BUDGET | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rural Health Care Pathways Expansion Grant | | | |
| | The grant budget line-item amounts below shall be applicable only to expense incurred during the following | | | |
| **Applicable Period:** | **BEGIN:** | | **END:** | |
| **POLICY 03 Object Line-item Reference** | **EXPENSE OBJECT LINE-ITEM CATEGORY** [1] | **GRANT CONTRACT** | **GRANTEE PARTICIPATION** | **TOTAL PROJECT** |
| 1, 2 | Salaries, Benefits & Taxes | $117,522 | 0.00 | $117,522 |
| 4, 15 | Professional Fee, Grant & Award [2] | $1,205,469 | 0.00 | $1,205,469 |
| 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 | Supplies, Telephone, Postage & Shipping, Occupancy, Equipment Rental & Maintenance, Printing & Publications | $89,500 | 0.00 | $89,500 |
| 11, 12 | Travel, Conferences & Meetings | $20,562 | 0.00 | $20,562 |
| 13 | Interest [2] | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 14 | Insurance | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 16 | Specific Assistance To Individuals | $454,580 | 0.00 | $454,580 |
| 17 | Depreciation [2] | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 18 | Other Non-Personnel [2] | $84,000 | 0.00 | $84,000 |
| 20 | Capital Purchase [2] | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 22 | Indirect Cost | $ 28,366 | 0.00 | $28,366 |
| 24 | In-Kind Expense | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 25 | **GRAND TOTAL** | **$1,999,999** | **0.00** | **$1,999,999** |

[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.

**APPENDIX A: Tables**

**Table 1.** *High school demographics in focus counties*

|  | Number of high schools | High school students in county | Economically disadvantaged students | Students with disabilities | English language learners |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Greene** | 4 | 1945 | 24% | 19% | 2% or less |
| **Hawkins** | 2 | 2100 | 33% | 16% | 2% or less |
| **Johnson** | 1 | 599 | 28% | 17% | Less than 10 students |

Source: Tennessee Department of Education (2024)

**Table 2.** *Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) crosswalk*

| CIP2020Code | CIP2020Title | SOC2018Code | SOC2018Title |
|---|---|---|---|
| 51.3801 | Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse. | 25-1072 | Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary |
| 51.3801 | Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse. | 29-1141 | Registered Nurses |
| 51.3899 | Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing, Other. | 25-1072 | Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary |
| 51.3899 | Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing, Other. | 29-1141 | Registered Nurses |
| 51.3899 | Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing, Other. | 29-1171 | Nurse Practitioners |
| 51.3901 | Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training. | 29-2061 | Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses |

| 51.3902 | Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide. | 31-1131 | Nursing Assistants |
|---|---|---|---|
| 51.3999 | Practical Nursing, Vocational Nursing and Nursing Assistants, Other. | 29-2061 | Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses |
| 51.3999 | Practical Nursing, Vocational Nursing and Nursing Assistants, Other. | 31-1131 | Nursing Assistants |

**Table 3.** *Key Metrics*

| Metric | Year 1 Target | Year 2 Target | Year 3 Target | Year 4 Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students Recruited (Cohorts) | N/A | 60 students (Cohort 1 & 2) | 60 students (cohort 3 & 4) | N/A |
| CNA Certifications Attained | N/A | 40 | 40 | N/A |
| RN/BSN Pathways Formalized | N/A | N/A | Initial RN pathway established | Full RN/BSN pathways formalized |
| New Partnerships Secured | N/A | 5 new partnerships | 5 new partnerships | 5 new partnerships |
| Long-Term Funding Secured | Initial commitments | Ongoing advocacy | Partial funding secured | Full funding secured |

**Table 4.** *Timeline of Activities*

| Activity | Q1-Aug - Oct | Q2-Nov-Jan | Q3-Feb-Apr | Q4-May-July |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Establish Steering Committee and Working Group comprising school district leaders, Ballad Health representatives, postsecondary partners, and community organizations | Y1 | | | |
| Finalize partnership agreements with high schools, community colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied | Y1 | Y1 | | |

| Activity | Q1-Aug - Oct | Q2-Nov-Jan | Q3-Feb-Apr | Q4-May-July |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Technology (TCATs), and Ballad Health | | | | |
| Hire Staff Positions (Nurse Educators, Pathway Advisor) | Y1 | Y1 | | |
| Initiate the *exploration phase* of implementation in partnership with school districts and postsecondary institutions (i.e., explore needs and assets, assess fit and feasibility) | Y1 | Y1 | | |
| Begin community outreach efforts to inform students and parents about the program. | | Y1 | | |
| Convene Steering Committee and Working Group for quarterly review of progress. | | Y1 | | |
| Begin *installation phase* of implementation (i.e., develop infrastructure to support pathway, including individual and organizational capacity) | | Y1 | | |
| Order necessary instructional and clinical equipment for participating high schools. | | Y1 | | |
| Finalize student recruitment strategy and develop promotional materials (brochures, mailers, digital marketing content). | | Y1 | | |
| Schedule and conduct in-person informational sessions for students and parents at partner high schools. | | Y1 | | |
| **Year 1, Quarter 1- 2 Milestones:**<br>• Formation of governance and working structures.<br>• Signed MOUs with all education partners.<br>• Equipment procurement initiated<br>• Student recruitment strategy finalized<br>• Staff hired | | | | |
| Deliver professional development for high school educators and counselors on the program curriculum and hybrid instruction model. | | | Y1 | Y1 |
| Finalize and implement transportation plan for students to access clinical sites at Ballad Health hospitals or other training sites. | | | Y1 | Y1 |
| Continue marketing and recruitment efforts, including targeted outreach to low-income and underserved student populations. | | | Y1 | Y1 |
| Conduct first quarterly program review and gather feedback from students, parents, and educators. | | | | Y1 |
| **Year 1, Quarter 3-4 Milestones:**<br>• Professional development sessions completed<br>• Initial cohort of students recruited | | | | |

| Activity | Q1-<br>Aug -<br>Oct | Q2-<br>Nov-<br>Jan | Q3-<br>Feb-<br>Apr | Q4-<br>May-<br>July |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Begin *initial implementation* of pathway project (i.e., begin dual enrollment courses at partner high schools for the initial cohort). | Y2 | | | |
| Initiate clinical learning experiences. | Y2 | | | |
| Begin tracking key metrics, including student enrollment, attendance, and engagement levels. | Y2 | | | |
| Launch sustainability planning efforts with local and state policymakers. | Y2 | | | |
| Initiate recruitment for the second cohort of students. | | Y2 | | |
| Assess program effectiveness based on Year 1 metrics and make necessary adjustments to curriculum and clinical instruction. | | Y2 | | |
| Continue community outreach efforts and student support services, including financial aid counseling, transportation assistance, and academic advising. | | Y2 | | |
| Convene Steering Committee for program progress review and expansion planning. | | Y2 | | |
| Procure additional instructional and clinical equipment as needed for scaling. | | Y2 | | |
| Conduct quarterly professional development sessions for educators and clinical instructors. | | Y2 | | |
| Convene Working Group to review curriculum updates and clinical training practices. | | Y2 | | |
| **Year 2, Quarter 1-2 Milestones:**<br>• Program launch with the first cohort<br>• Clinical training initiated<br>• Initial sustainability plan drafted<br>• Program evaluation report for Year 1 completed.<br>• Second cohort recruitment completed.<br>• Scaling plan for instructional capacity developed. | | | | |
| Conduct follow-up professional development for existing and new educators. | | | Y2 | |
| Continue clinical training for the first cohort and begin clinical training for the second cohort. | | | Y2 | |
| Expand tracking and reporting of program outcomes, including student progress and clinical performance. | | | Y2 | |
| Continue dual enrollment and clinical coursework for both cohorts. | | | Y2 | |
| Begin post-graduation planning and career placement for first cohort students who are eligible to graduate high school | | | | Y2 |

| Activity | Q1-Aug - Oct | Q2-Nov-Jan | Q3-Feb-Apr | Q4-May-July |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Conduct Year 2 program evaluation and present findings to the Steering Committee and key stakeholders. | | | | Y2 |
| Refine the sustainability plan and continue engagement with policymakers and potential funders. | | | | Y2 |
| **Year 2, Quarter 3-4 Milestones:**<br>• Second cohort onboarded and enrolled.<br>• 1st & 2nd cohort completes CNA certification exams and are eligible for employment.<br>• Program evaluation report for Year 2 completed.<br>• Sustainability plan finalized. | | | | |
| Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of Years 1 and 2, using feedback from students, parents, educators, and clinical instructors to refine program curriculum and clinical experiences. | Y3 | | | |
| Continue targeted outreach, emphasizing the program's success stories (e.g., first cohort students securing CNA positions and continuing their education). | Y3 | | | |
| Conduct quarterly professional development sessions for existing and new high school educators, postsecondary faculty, and clinical instructors. | Y3 | | | |
| Begin dual enrollment and clinical coursework for the third cohort. | Y3 | | | |
| Finalize plans for scaling the program additional clinical sites. | Y3 | Y3 | | |
| Complete recruitment for the 4th cohort, ensuring all students have access to necessary support services (e.g., transportation, academic advising, financial aid counseling). | Y3 | | | |
| Procure additional clinical training equipment (e.g., simulation equipment, consumable supplies) to accommodate increased student enrollment. | Y3 | Y3 | | |
| Continue engagement with policymakers, local leaders, and potential funders to advocate for ongoing public and private financial support. | Y3 | Y3 | | |
| **Year 3 Quarter 1-2 Milestones**<br>• Refinements to curriculum and clinical components completed.<br>• Cohort 1 has completed program<br>• Third cohort enrollment completed.<br>• Clinical training capacity expanded.<br>• Advocacy meetings with state and local leaders conducted. | | | | |

| Activity | Q1-Aug - Oct | Q2-Nov-Jan | Q3-Feb-Apr | Q4-May-July |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expand student support services, such as counseling, tutoring, and wrap-around services, based on lessons learned from Years 1 and 2. | | | Y3 | Y3 |
| Continue clinical coursework and hands-on experiences, ensuring their readiness for CNA/LPN certification exams. | | | Y3 | Y3 |
| Begin post-graduation planning and career placement for second cohort students who are eligible to graduate high school. | | | | Y3 |
| Conduct Year 3 program evaluation, focusing on student outcomes, clinical experiences, and employment rates. | | | | Y3 |
| **Year 3 Quarter 3-4 Milestones:**<br>• Clinical training for the second cohort completed.<br>• Year 3 program evaluation completed. | | | | |
| Deepen engagement with state agencies and philanthropic partners to secure additional funding for long-term program sustainability and expansion to other healthcare careers. | Y4 | | | |
| Conduct training sessions for educators and clinical instructors, focusing on program updates and best practices in dual enrollment and clinical training. | Y4 | | | |
| Develop formal pathways for students to transition from CNA to LPN to RN or BSN programs, in partnership with ETSU and regional TCATs and community colleges. | Y4 | Y4 | | |
| Continue clinical coursework and training for 3rd and 4th cohorts. | Y4 | Y4 | | |
| Increase marketing efforts, highlighting program graduates' success stories for sustainability. | Y4 | Y4 | | |
| **Year 4, Quarter 1-2 Milestones**<br>• New funding opportunities identified.<br>• RN/BSN pathway formalized with postsecondary partners.<br>• Cohort 3 has completed program | | | | |
| Begin post-graduation planning and career placement for 3rd & 4th cohort students who are eligible to graduate high school | | | | Y4 |
| Complete and present a long-term sustainability plan to Ballad Health leadership, state policymakers, and key stakeholders. | | | Y4 | Y4 |
| Continue coursework and clinical training for the fourth cohort. | | | Y4 | Y4 |

| Activity | Q1-Aug - Oct | Q2-Nov-Jan | Q3-Feb-Apr | Q4-May-July |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Key Deliverables by the End of Year 4**<br>• 100+ students enrolled across four cohorts<br>• 70+ graduates with CNA certifications, many eligible for employment by Ballad Health or pursuing further education.<br>• Fully scaled program operating across all partner high schools and clinical sites.<br>• Formalized RN/BSN pathway with ongoing postsecondary support.<br>• Secured long-term public and private funding for program sustainability and potential expansion into additional healthcare careers. | | | | |

**APPENDIX B: References**

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**APPENDIX C: Memorandum of Understanding**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**
**between**
**EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, BALLAD HEALTH, GREENE COUNTY SCHOOLS, HAWKINS COUNTY SCHOOLS, JOHNSON COUNTY SCHOOLS, TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY ELIZABETHTON, AND TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY MORRISTOWN**

## 1.0 PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

This Memorandum ("MOU") between East Tennessee State University, Ballad Health, Greene County Schools, Hawkins County Schools, Johnson County Schools, Tennessee College of Applied Technology ("TCAT") Elizabethton, and TCAT Morristown (together, "Parties") serves to formalize the collaboration of the Parties in submission of and work on the Rural Health Care Pathways Expansion Grant ("RHCPE") to develop health care career pathway programs in rural Northeast Tennessee.

The Parties intend to work together to address critical healthcare workforce shortages in rural Northeast Tennessee by developing a seamless high school-to-postsecondary education and/or workforce pipeline that leads to high-demand credentials and sustainable careers in nursing.

## 2.0 SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

The Parties, either together, separately, or in partnership, agree to the below activities, identified by specific Party where appropriate.

2.1 East Tennessee State University will serve as the fiscal sponsor of the program and will be responsible for the below activities. The benefits of these activities include strengthening regional leadership in healthcare workforce development, increasing institutional collaboration and community engagement, and creating the potential to increase enrollment in Registered Nurse ("RN"), Bachelor of Science in Nursing ("BSN"), and other healthcare degrees.

   2.1.1 Convening a regional planning team of stakeholders and partners, and shepherding key milestones to a successful launch.

   2.1.2 Setting, measuring, and tracking budgeting and program outcomes and goals.

   2.1.3 Evaluating hospital and high school facilities for program use.

   2.1.4 Providing professional development and other capacity-building activities to faculty and staff delivering services to students.

   2.1.5 Facilitate enrollment in the Pre-Licensed Practical Nurse ("LPN") Pathways project with the support of postsecondary partners through marketing and recruitment efforts.

   2.1.6 Serving as the liaison and managing the partnership between high schools and postsecondary partners to ensure alignment of program, coursework, faculty, and funding.

   2.1.7 Shepherding students through licensure processes, including exams and clinical requirements.

2.1.8 Engaging in sustainability planning to identify policy and funding opportunities for sustainability and program growth.

2.1.9 Developing a program evaluation framework, tracking outcomes data, and completing grant-required reporting.

2.1.10 Overseeing program implementation to ensure fidelity among all partners.

2.1.11 Providing regular reports to all partners, including updates on budgeting, program outcomes, and milestones achieved.

2.2 Ballad Health will be responsible for the below activities. The benefits of these activities include creating a sustainable, local pipeline of skilled nursing professionals and reducing nursing staff shortages and the reliance on temporary labor solutions that such shortages necessitate.

2.2.1 Providing dedicated time to this project for the full-time Program Director and dedicated time would be provided by the Academics team of Ballad Health.

2.2.2 Hiring and managing nurse educators and pathway advisors to support program implementation.

2.2.3 Working with school districts to design and implement work-based learning opportunities and other clinical training requirements for licensure.

2.2.4 Prioritizing interviews for program completers who meet hiring expectations, offering them full-time employment, if eligible.

2.2.5 Engaging in sustainability planning to identify policy and funding opportunities for long-term program sustainability and growth.

2.3 Greene County Schools, Hawkins County Schools, and Johnson County Schools will be responsible for the below activities. The benefits of these activities include enhanced student access to healthcare career pathways and increased postsecondary and workforce readiness among students.

2.3.1 Providing faculty and space for students to engage in both in-person and virtual learning.

2.3.2 Supporting student enrollment in the program through marketing and recruitment activities.

2.3.3 Partnering with East Tennessee State University and Ballad Health staff to address student needs, including retention challenges and career counseling.

2.3.4 Collecting and reporting student data to support program evaluation and improvement.

2.4 TCAT Elizabethton and TCAT Morristown will be responsible for the below activities. The benefits of these activities include expanded enrollment in healthcare programs and strengthened partnerships with local schools and healthcare providers.

2.4.1 Implementing program coursework sequences in collaboration with Ballad Health and East Tennessee State University to ensure accelerated CNA and/or Pre-LPN credential completion.

2.4.2 Offering seamless enrollment opportunities for students continuing their education toward advanced healthcare credentials.

2.4.3   Partnering with East Tennessee State University and Ballad Health staff to address student needs, including retention challenges and career counseling.

2.4.4   Collecting and reporting student data to support program evaluation and reporting requirements.

2.5 The Parties, in collaboration with one another, will establish a Steering Committee, comprising representatives from each Party along with community stakeholders. The Steering Committee will meet quarterly to review progress, address challenges, and strategize on sustainability efforts.

## 3.0 ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

3.1 This MOU shall be effective from the date of last signature below and shall remain valid through the end of the project, if awarded, but in no event shall be valid for more than five years. However, the Parties may renew the MOU at the time of expiration through written agreement.

3.2 This MOU may be amended only by the written consent of the Parties.

3.3 The Parties shall be treated as independent contractors. None of the provisions of this MOU are intended to create, nor shall they be construed to create, an agency, partnership, or joint venture of employer/employee relationship.

3.4 This MOU includes the entire agreement between the Parties, but does not create any legally binding obligations among the Parties.

3.5 Each Party shall continue under the control of its own officers and boards of directors or trustees, and each shall remain solely responsible in all respects for the management of its own affairs. Each Party shall retain the exclusive right to appoint their respective staff and faculty.

3.6 This Agreement may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which when executed and delivered shall constitute a duplicate original, but all the counterparts shall together constitute the one agreement.

The Parties have offered their signatures hereto:

**East Tennessee State University**

Nicholas E Hagemeier   Digitally signed by Nicholas E
Hagemeier
Date: 2025.01.27 12:11:49 -05'00'

Nicholas E. Hagemeier
Vice Provost for Research

**Ballad Health**

Name/Date
Title

**Johnson County School District**

Name/Date
Title

**Hawkins County School District**

Name/Date
Title

**TCAT Morristown**

Name/Date
Title

**Greene County School District**

Name/Date
Title

**TCAT Elizabethton**

Name/Date
Title

The Parties have offered their signatures hereto:

**East Tennessee State University**

_____

Nicholas E. Hagemeier
Vice Provost for Research

**Ballad Health**

_Matthew___X_____

Name/Date
Title        Matthew Loos
                 Jan 30, 2025

**Johnson County School District**

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Name/Date
Title

**Hawkins County School District**

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Name/Date
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**TCAT Morristown**

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Name/Date
Title

**Greene County School District**

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Name/Date
Title

**TCAT Elizabethton**

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Name/Date
Title

The Parties have offered their signatures hereto:
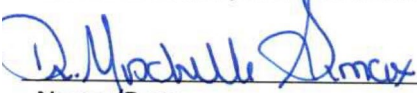
**East Tennessee State University**

_____

Nicholas E. Hagemeier
Vice Provost for Research

**Ballad Health**

_____

Name/Date
Title

**Johnson County School District**

D. Machelle Amcox        1·27·25
Name/Date
Title Director of Schools

**Hawkins County School District**

_____

Name/Date
Title

**TCAT Morristown**

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Name/Date
Title

**Greene County School District**

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Name/Date
Title

**TCAT Elizabethton**

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Name/Date
Title

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The Parties have offered their signatures hereto:

**East Tennessee State University**

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Nicholas E. Hagemeier
Vice Provost for Research
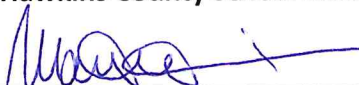
**Ballad Health**

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Name/Date
Title

**Johnson County School District**

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Name/Date
Title

**Hawkins County School District**

_____
Name/Date  Matt Hixson  1/27/25
Title  Director of Schools

**TCAT Morristown**

_____

Name/Date
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**Greene County School District**

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**TCAT Elizabethton**

_____

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Title

4

The Parties have offered their signatures hereto:

**East Tennessee State University**                    **Ballad Health**

_____                    _____
Nicholas E. Hagemeier                         Name/Date
Vice Provost for Research                      Title


**Johnson County School District**                    **Hawkins County School District**

_____                    _____
Name/Date                                     Name/Date
Title                                         Title


**TCAT Morristown**                           **Greene County School District**

_Susanne Cox_
_____                    _____
Susanne Cox / 01/29/2025                       Name/Date
President TCAT Morristown                      Title


**TCAT Elizabethton**

_____
Name/Date
Title

The Parties have offered their signatures hereto:

**East Tennessee State University**

_____

Nicholas E. Hagemeier
Vice Provost for Research

**Ballad Health**

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**Johnson County School District**

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**Hawkins County School District**

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**TCAT Morristown**

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Name/Date
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**Greene County School District**

David McLain          1/27/21

Name/Date
Title  *Director of Schools*

**TCAT Elizabethton**

_____

Name/Date
Title

The Parties have offered their signatures hereto:

**East Tennessee State University**

_____
Nicholas E. Hagemeier
Vice Provost for Research

**Ballad Health**

_____
Name/Date
Title

**Johnson County School District**

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**Hawkins County School District**

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**TCAT Morristown**

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Name/Date
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**Greene County School District**

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Name/Date
Title

**TCAT Elizabethton**

_Heath McMillian_
_____
Heath McMillian          1/31/25
President