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THEC Partners with Lumina Foundation to Strengthen Workforce Training Through FutureReady States Initiative

Tennessee Selected to Advance Short-Term Credential Strategies that Meet Workforce Needs

NASHVILLE, TN – July 10, 2025 – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is proud to announce its participation in **FutureReady States**, a national initiative led by **Lumina Foundation** to help states ensure short-term credential programs deliver real economic value for adult learners and local communities.

As one of only 12 states selected for this initiative, Tennessee will receive funding and technical assistance to evaluate and enhance its short-term workforce training programs—such as certificates and industry-recognized credentials—to better align with employer demand and improve student outcomes.

“In Tennessee, we are committed to strengthening education-to-employment pathways that provide Tennesseans with faster, more affordable opportunities to build skills and access quality jobs,” said Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director of THEC. “This partnership with Lumina will allow us to take a closer look at how our short-term credential programs are performing and ensure they are truly meeting the needs of both learners and employers across the state.”

Through **FutureReady States**, Tennessee will:

- Evaluate existing investments in short-term credential programs.
- Identify opportunities to improve program effectiveness and accessibility.
- Develop metrics to measure outcomes such as job placement, wage growth, and continued education.
- Align education and workforce systems with local employer needs.

Tennessee’s work will be supported by **Education Strategy Group (ESG)**, a national organization that partners with states to advance education and workforce alignment. Together, THEC and ESG will develop a data-informed action plan that helps elevate high-quality credentials and ensures Tennesseans are well-prepared for in-demand careers.

“Millions of adults are looking for fast, affordable ways to gain new skills—and employers want talent today,” said Chauncy Lennon, Lumina’s Vice President for Learning and Work.

“FutureReady States can help states meet this moment by giving everyone a laser focus on what works.”

Lumina Foundation has committed \$2.2 million nationally to support this first phase of the initiative, which prioritizes planning and assessment. States with strong action plans may be eligible for future funding to implement recommended improvements.

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The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The Commission develops, implements, evaluates postsecondary education policies and programs in Tennessee while coordinating the state’s systems of higher education, and is relentlessly focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.