



Funding Opportunity Announcement
Grant Application Guide
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2027

Rural Healthcare
Workforce Development Initiatives

Application Due Date:

December 2, 2024

5:00 PM Central Time

Submit application via email to the following:

Rural Workforce Initiatives Rural.Workforce@tn.gov

Copy Teresa Smith TL.Smith@tn.gov

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: FOA-TN-RHCI-25-01

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Rural Healthcare

Workforce Development Initiatives Grant

Executive Summary

Rural communities in Tennessee often struggle to access quality healthcare due to factors like limited facilities, long travel distances, workforce shortages, and high costs. Governor Bill Lee is prioritizing initiatives to improve rural healthcare. The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) is leading efforts to address workforce shortages across various industries, with healthcare as a priority. The healthcare workforce in Tennessee's rural communities is facing significant shortages in multiple fields, including dental hygiene, nursing, social work, and medical technology. As the demand for healthcare services continues to grow, the challenge of recruiting and retaining talent is compounded by barriers that students and workers face, such as limited financial support and training opportunities.

This initiative aims to leverage existing healthcare training structures and expand apprenticeship and Workforce Development Initiatives (WDI) to strengthen the pipeline of healthcare professionals in rural communities. Financial support will be provided to sponsoring entities to offer training, certification, and apprenticeships, while also addressing ancillary costs like transportation, childcare, and examination fees that create barriers for participants. The TDLWD, Rural Workforce Initiatives, is supporting local efforts to increase training and employment through the Rural Healthcare Initiatives grant.

Assessment of Need

Governor Bill Lee established the Tennessee Rural Healthcare Task Force ("Task Force"), led as a private partnership originating in the Tennessee Department of Health, to build upon Tennessee's investments into rural healthcare. The Task Force developed a set of recommendations including innovative programs, policy and funding opportunities, and legislative agenda considerations, focused on improving rural healthcare access across Tennessee. Taskforce identified three priority areas that have downstream impacts on all rural Tennessee communities: Access to Care, Workforce Development, and Social Drivers of Health – these serve as the guiding light for this funding opportunity and improved service delivery to come.

Current and future Statewide healthcare workforce supply inadequacies include dental hygienist/assistants, registered nurses (RNs), mental health/substance abuse social workers, social/human service assistants, licensed practical/vocational nurses, clinical laboratory technologists/technicians, respiratory therapists, and medical records and health information technicians. Additionally, students often face several barriers (e.g.,

limited financial support and training opportunities) related to healthcare education and employment.

Program Purpose

In alignment with TDLWD's mission to advance workforce development and improve workplace safety, leveraging existing healthcare training structures to support and expand registered apprenticeship, Workforce Development Initiatives (WDI's) and Work Based Learning (WBL) opportunities in rural communities are the primary focus of this grant program. Applicants are encouraged to build upon existing talent pipelines to healthcare occupations by connecting talent to opportunity and focusing on the following:

- state and local partner engagement
- retaining talent
- recruiting new talent
- growing existing talent
- supporting career changers
- removing barriers and allowing flexibility

The initiative will offer financial support for:

- **Rural Sponsoring Entities:** For training, certifications, course credits, and other necessary components of healthcare education.
- **Apprentices and WDI/WBL Participants:** To cover ancillary costs such as transportation, childcare, uniforms (scrubs), certification and examination fees, annual background checks, and drug screenings.
- **Apprenticeship and WDI/WBL Program Development:** Support for healthcare associations and accrediting bodies to develop or expand apprenticeship/WDI/WBL programs to address the growing demand for healthcare professionals in rural areas.

Program Elements

1. **Leveraging Existing Training Structures**
Create new and/or expand and strengthen existing healthcare training programs, apprenticeships, and Workforce Development Initiatives (WDIs) in rural communities.
2. **Financial Support**
Provide financial assistance to rural sponsoring entities for training, certifications, and course credits, as well as apprenticeships for individuals to cover transportation, childcare, supplies, certification fees, and other costs that often prevent participation.
3. **Adult Education Workforce Development Initiatives (WDI), Work-Based Learning (WBL) and Work Experience (WEX)**

Identify and expand short-term, credential-based programs such as WDI's, WBL or WEX that can be quickly replicated across rural areas.

4. **Partnerships with Employers and Educational Programs**

Partner with at least one employer in the healthcare field to ensure job placements for program participants and engage local educational institutions to provide academic support, wraparound support, and job training.

5. **Outreach and Recruitment**

Implement targeted recruitment campaigns to attract new talent, retain the current workforce, and support career changers, with a special focus on underrepresented populations in rural areas. Collaborate with American Job Centers and WIOA programs, specifically Apprenticeship, and Adult Education programs to promote careers in rural healthcare. Actively engage employers with all other partners to ensure the career seeker can be placed upon program completion.

6. **Evaluation and Monitoring**

Monitor outcomes and adjust programming as necessary to continue to build a firm foundation of recruitment and training for healthcare occupations. Track program outcomes, including enrollment, completion rates, job placements, and continued training, to ensure the program is meeting its goals and adjust strategies as necessary.

Key Objectives

- **State and Local Partner Engagement:** Engage partners to leverage assistance for programming and participants.
- **Retain Current Workforce:** Foster retention through ongoing development and support.
- **Develop Local Talent:** Create local talent pipelines by building educational and career pathways.
- **Support Career Changers:** Provide training and certification programs for individuals transitioning into healthcare careers.
- **Recruit New Talent:** Attract new individuals into the workforce by offering support and opportunities.
- **Expand Existing Programs:** Utilize current resources to strengthen healthcare training for positions like CNA, Dental Assistant, EMT, Medical Assistant, and Pharmacy/Lab Technicians.
- **WDI, WBL, and WEX Programs:** Identify short-term certification or credentialing programs that can be replicated across rural areas to provide quick, effective workforce entry.
- **Expand Apprenticeship Opportunities:** Increase access to apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in rural healthcare.
- **Collaborate with Job Centers & WIOA Programs:** Engage local American Job Centers and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs to promote rural healthcare careers.

- **Outcome Monitoring:** Regularly monitor program outcomes and make necessary adjustments to enhance recruitment and training.
- **Employer Engagement:** Collaborate with local employers to ensure healthcare workers are equipped with the skills needed to be effective immediately upon entry into the workforce.

Eligibility

1. **Rural Sponsoring Entities:** Organizations based in one of Tennessee's 91 rural counties (excluding Davidson, Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby counties) are eligible to apply. Entities located in metropolitan areas (Davidson, Hamilton, Knox, and Shelby counties) may apply if the services are provided in rural areas.
2. To apply for a grant, an applicant must be an "**eligible provider**", and grants will be awarded to eligible providers on a competitive basis. The term "eligible provider" means an organization that may include, but is not limited to:
 - a) A local educational agency;
 - b) A local workforce development board;
 - c) A community-based organization or faith-based organization;
 - d) An institution of higher education;
 - e) A public or private nonprofit agency;
 - f) A hospital or healthcare facility;
 - g) A dental office/facility or training program;
 - h) A healthcare training provider;
 - i) A healthcare association/organization;
 - j) A nonprofit institution that is not described in any of subparagraphs (a) through (i) and has the ability to provide training activities to eligible individuals;
 - k) A consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in any of subparagraphs (a) through (i); and
 - l) A partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of subparagraphs (a) through (j).

Funding Availability and Timeline

- **Total Available Funding:** \$5,605,000
- **Maximum Grant Request:** \$250,000 per applicant for program year July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Grant amount may vary depending on submissions and negotiations may need to occur pending the number applications submitted for this award. Submission of application does not guarantee funding.
- **Seed Funding:** Up to 50% of the total grant request is available for planning and implementation from February 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025.
- **Administrative Costs:** Maximum of 10% of the total budget may be used for administrative purposes.

- **Categories:**
 - **Category A: Apprenticeships** (\$2,746,270)
 - **Category B: Workforce Development Initiatives** (\$2,674,730)
 - **Category C: Supportive Services** (\$184,000)

Note: Monthly financial and performance reporting requirements will be shared by TDLWD after the Notice of Award.

GRANT TIMELINE	
Funding Announcement Release Date	October 14, 2024
Q&A Form Available for Questions	October 28-November 8, 2024
Q&A Information Session	November 1, 2024
Applications Due by 5:00 pm CST	December 2, 2024
Application Review Period	December 3-15, 2024
Notification of Awards	January 6, 2025
Seed Funding for Planning and Implementation	February 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025
Contract and Performance Period	July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026

Funding Information

Seed Funding Period: February 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025

This period will provide initial funds to support program planning and early implementation, including infrastructure development, program marketing, and community outreach.

Contract Performance Period: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Funds will support the full-scale implementation of the program. Annual evaluation metrics will track the success of apprenticeships, retention, recruitment, and talent development.

Category A: Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Expansion of State Approved Apprenticeship and/or State Certified Pre-Apprenticeship (see ApprenticeshipTN for more information)	\$2,746,270.00
Category B: Workforce Development Initiatives Adult Education Workforce Development Initiatives (WDI), Work-Based Learning (WBL), and Work Experience (WEX), Integrated Education & Training, Workplace Specific, Adult Education Post-Secondary Pathways and Post-Secondary Dual Enrollment opportunities	\$2,674,730.00
Category C: Supportive Services Support apprentices by covering ancillary costs like transportation, childcare, supplies, scrubs, certification fees, examination fees, initial background checks and drug screens.	\$184,000.00

Question-and-Answer Form

A question-and-answer form for prospective applicants can be found on the TDLWD website ([click here for link](#)). This form will be live and able to receive questions **October 28 - November 8, 2024**. TDLWD will post answers at minimum once per week during the Q&A period.

Information Session

On **November 1, 2024, 1:00 pm CST**, TDLWD will hold a virtual information session to discuss the FOA and application process with prospective applicants. Prospective applicants may use this time to ask clarifying questions and seek more information about TDLWD's expectations for applications or the grant in general.

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 286 314 388 402

Passcode: AdRvfE

Dial in by phone.

[+1 629-209-4396,697819644#](#) United States, Triune

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 697 819 644#

Join on a video conferencing device.

Tenant key: [stateoftn@m.webex.com](#)

Application

Applicants must submit a comprehensive proposal outlining:

- **Program Design:** Clear strategy on how the program will address the healthcare workforce shortage.
- **Partnerships:** Letters of support from sector partners (e.g., local employers, educational institutions).
- **Sustainability Plan:** Plan for sustaining the program beyond the contract period.
- **Budget:** Detailed budget showing the allocation of funds for training, support services, and program management.

Application Format

Applicants should write their grant application using the following format:

- Be written in narrative form;
- Be formatted using 12-point, double-spaced, Times New Roman or Open Sans font;
- Include numbered pages and a running header containing the applicant name;
- Be organized and include clearly labeled section headings to distinguish each part;
- Include cover page; and
- Be submitted as a Word document or PDF.
- Applicants must also provide a completed budget proposal spreadsheet.

The application should address each of the required elements listed and follow the instructions listed above. Failure to do so may result in the application being disqualified or receiving a low score.

THE FORMAL APPLICATION SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) **Cover Page** (Organization Name, all pertinent contact information, counties to be served, category of funding, and amount requested). Download official cover page from website.
- 2) **Grant Proposal Narrative and Expected Outcomes**
 - a) Brief description of organization with evidence of demonstrative effectiveness of providing healthcare related training
 - b) Desired service area (i.e., county, city, or other geographic regions) where training, community wraparound services, and job placement will occur and the need for the specific workforce development in the stated area using local data, labor force participation rates, and [labor market information](#).
 - c) Identification of the healthcare occupations that will be the focus for potential employment, based on current local data and/or future labor market demands in the geographic area. In addition to at least one employer partner in healthcare that will provide an opportunity for program participants.
 - d) Provide a clear strategy on how the program will address the healthcare workforce shortage. As well as a detailed description of the healthcare program to be developed including educational programs to be provided and by whom, the timeline related to each cohort, the type of on-the-job training (via apprenticeship, pre apprenticeship, WDI, WBL, WEX), the program related cost and the cost per participant, and explain the roles of each partner.
 - e) Program narrative of direct support for participants that can include but not be limited to program costs covered for participants on-the-job training, educational and/or vocational services to be provided to participants.
 - f) A mandatory partnership with the local American Job Center in addition to any other entities that provide wraparound support services for program participants. As well as a partnership with surrounding local Adult Education programs to assist with programming and/or recruitment/outreach.
 - g) Explain the programs intended outcomes, such as enrollment, completions, number entering additional training, occupations, and employment.
 - h) Explain the letters of support from each partner organization that clearly define their role in the program.
- 3) **Letters of Support**
 - a) Employer partnership letter that commits to opportunity for all program completers
 - b) Letter of support from Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) chair and/or executive director confirming support from the One Stop Operator and American Job Center partner staff

- c) Letters of support from community wraparound partnering agencies, non-profits, or other non-governmental organizations identified to provide support services to program participants and their role.

4) Budget & Budget Narrative

- a) The Budget narrative must align with the parameters and guidelines provided in the with the proposed program design and targeted rural areas. A maximum of 10% of the total budget may be used for administrative costs.
- b) Attach the Excel budget pages (download official budget pages from website)

It is expected that all applications will include the required documents. The Rural Healthcare Workforce Initiatives grant is a cost reimbursement program, and all expenditures must occur within the relevant timeframe designated by the grant contract. The expected grant period is July 1, 2025, and will end on June 30, 2026.

Applications are due December 2, 2024.

Submit application via email to the following:

Attention: Rural Workforce Initiatives Rural.Workforce@tn.gov

CC: Teresa Smith TL.Smith@tn.gov

Subject: Rural Healthcare Funding Opportunity Number: FOA-TN-RHCI-25-01

The following FOA Documents are available on the website:

[Rural Workforce Initiatives Website](#)

- Rural Healthcare FOA Frequently Asked Questions
- Rural Healthcare FOA Excel Budget Pages (note: amounts in green are example numbers)
- Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) Grant Application Guide
- A question-and-answer form for prospective applicants can be found on the TDLWD website ([click here for link](#)) or use the QR code below to submit question. This link is live October 28 to November 8, 2024

