

Rural Postsecondary & Economic Development (RPED) Program Fiscal Year 2023 Summary of Funding

- **FY 2023 Appropriation:** \$45,000,000
- **FY 2023 Amount for New Awards:** \$44,550,000
- **Number of New Awards:** 22

Institution Name	State	Type of Institution	Award Amount	Abstract Page
Graham Community College District (Eastern Arizona College)	AZ	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,197,555	3
College Bridge	CA	501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization	\$2,196,928	4
Arizona State University	AZ	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,227,498	5
McDowell Technical Community College	NC	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,227,338	6
The University of New Mexico - Valencia	NM	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,218,830	7
Pitt Community College	NC	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$1,013,441	8
Chemeketa Community College	OR	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,222,423	9
Voorhees University	SC	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$1,965,332	10
Western Illinois University	IL	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,211,294	11
The Research Foundation at SUNY Alfred State College	NY	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,040,230	12
Appalachian State University	NC	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,227,500	13
Northern Illinois University	IL	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,105,846	14
Morehead State University	KY	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,218,048	15

The University of Pennsylvania	PA	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,227,263	16
Elizabethtown Community and Technical College	KY	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$1,900,000	17
Big Sandy Community and Technical College	KY	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$1,800,000	18
Athens State University	AL	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,209,424	19
Hazard Community and Technical College	KY	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,227,000	20
Columbia State Community College	TN	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$1,571,255	21
Vermont Technical College	VT	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$1,900,000	22
University of Pittsburgh	PA	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$2,227,368	23
Heritage University	WA	Institution of Higher Education (IHE)	\$1,415,427	24

Graham County Community College District, dba Eastern Arizona College (EAC)

Targeting **Rural Accessibility to College and Career (TRACC)**

Partners: EAC has Letters of Support from 23 formal partners and will work with an additional 42 high schools in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico. **The 23 partners are listed below.**

AZ@Work	Graham Co. Board of Supervisors	Greenlee Co. School Superintendent	Rural Community College Alliance
Duncan USD	Graham Co. Chamber of Commerce	Local First Arizona	Safford USD
EAC Alumni Foundation	Graham Co. Schools Superintendent	Morenci USD	EAC Small Business Development Center
Freeport McMoRan	Graham Co. Development Corp.	Mt. Graham Regional Med. Center	Thatcher USD
Ft. Thomas USD	Graham Co. Economic Development Org.	Open Loop Energy	United Way of Graham and Greenlee Counties
Gila Institute for Technology	Greenlee Co. Board of Supervisors	Pima USD	

Project Mission Statement: *EAC’s TRACC program will work collaboratively with community partners and schools to inspire and empower rural students to successfully enter in-demand fields through preparation, enrollment, and completion of postsecondary certificates or degrees.*

Services, Proposed Activities, Target Populations [TP]: The TRACC program will (1) establish an **Early College Program** [TP: *high school students in Graham and Greenlee Counties*], (2) create a **Career Service Center** [TP: *EAC students, community partners, and employers*] and (3) enhance **rural school outreach** [*8th-12th graders in recruitment areas of eastern AZ and western NM*].

Anticipated Results include: (1) Increase the # of rural secondary and postsecondary students served by TRACC to 1,250, (2) Double the # of concurrent credits earned by rural high school students, (3) Increase annual fall enrollment by 20%, (4) Double the # of students who meet with an advisor, (5) Increase retention rate of TRACC students by 16%, (6) Increase TRACC students transfer rate to 4-yr institutions by 20%, (7) Increase TRACC student completion rate of occupational and academic certificates, degrees or industry-recognized credentials by 10%, (8) Increase rural student visits to Career Service Center to 2,000, (9) Increase # of rural students who receive jobs or work-based learning opportunities by 24%, (10) Establish 100 community partnerships in the Career Service Center.

Priorities: Through the above-listed activities and referenced partnership with schools, workforce and economic development agencies, and other community partners, EAC TRACC addresses ***all Absolute, Competitive, and Invitational Priorities*** as detailed in the grant narrative. The College is located in a “Town: Remote” area, and all the secondary schools the grant serves are in locale codes 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43.

COLLEGE TRANSITION BRIDGE PROJECT A PROPOSAL FOR THE RPED PROGRAM

Abstract

- 1. Applicant institution, or nonprofit organization or agency and partner institutions**
Applicant nonprofit: College Bridge. Partner nonprofits: CVHEC and RAND.
College Partners: Columbia, Merced, Reedley, San Joaquin Delta, Coalinga, and Lemoore.
- 2. Project title:** College Transition Bridge (CT Bridge) Project
- 3. Proposed partners for the purpose of meeting the priorities:**
High School Partners: Coalinga (32), Firebaugh (41), Tranquillity (42), Dinuba (32), Orosi (32), Parlier (41), Reedley (32), Sonora (32), Bret Harte (32), and Summerville (41).
- 4. Target Population (e.g., faculty, staff, students)**
Black, Hispanic, low-income students from rural communities.
- 5. Services and Proposed Activities**
The proposed services are expansion of CT Bridge to provide students and educators access to college knowledge and workforce needs. Activities include program revision, professional development, program implementation, and evaluation for continuous improvement. The activities are grounded in four aligned Communities of Practice.
- 6. Anticipated Results**
Improve student knowledge of regional workforce needs; Improve high school counselor/teacher knowledge of regional workforce, associate degrees for transfer (ADTs) offered at partnering colleges, and math requirements; Determine impact of CT Bridge on students pursuing majors aligned with high-demand jobs; College matriculation rate will increase from regional rate of 57% to at least the state average of 63%, and Attainment of 30-units in first year of college will increase from state average of 4% to 8%.
- 7. Absolute Priorities Addressed:** Yes, meeting 1 subpart of AP1 and all 6 subparts of AP2.
 - Absolute Priority 1: Part b, 59% of schools have locale codes of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43.
 - Absolute Priority 2: A few examples: Part a: Using supported dual enrollment to create a seamless transition to college; Part b: Increasing the college access and success rates for Black, Hispanic, low-income, and rural students Part f: expanding college counseling to include career exploration tied to regional workforce needs.
- 8. Competitive Preference Priority Addressed: Yes.** The CT Bridge project is a cross-agency collaboration of 30 intersegmental partners focused on the common goal of improving student transitions from high school through college and into the workforce. Partners include the UC, three CSUs, six CCCs, and 17 high schools.
- 9. Invitational Priority or Priorities Addressed: Yes, all three are addressed.**
CT Bridge supports students in the transition from high school through college, is driving by career pathways that lead to regional workforce needs, and continues through the transition from community college through the university.

Invest in Our Children; Invest in Our Future Project Abstract

Project Meets the absolute priorities, including the relevant NCES locale codes:

The *Invest in Our Children; Invest in Our Future (Invest)* project is a partnership between Arizona State University (ASU), the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), the San Carlos Apache Tribe (SCAT), their schools, and the American Indian Chamber of Commerce to improve rates of postsecondary enrollment and completion to prepare future leaders for careers that will lead to personal success and the betterment of their respective Tribes. The *Invest* meets:

- Absolute Priority 1: The Applicant Agency, Arizona State University, is an Institution of Higher Education and will serve communities, schools and campuses with a locale code of 33, 41, 42, or 43. The schools include the San Carlos USD schools located in and around San Carlos Arizona, Ft Turnbull Elementary School and Mt Turnbull Academy, Ft Thomas High School located in and around Bylas, Arizona, and Sacaton School and Blackwater Community School, both located in GRIC.
- Absolute Priority 2: The *Invest* project is designed to increase postsecondary access, affordability, completion, and success for underserved students. ASU's Office of Educational Outreach and Student Services, Office of K-12 School Partnerships, and Access ASU will develop and provide programs and activities to increase postsecondary access for the youth of the two respective tribal communities.

Project meets the competitive preference priority: Invest Strengthens Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement To Advance Systemic Change. ASU will support efforts to develop the Tribal Education Departments (TED) into comprehensive Tribal Education Agencies (TEA's). This includes expanding the services offered by the respective Tribe's College and Career Centers. Rather than operating as silo programs, the University, TED/TEA, schools, State Dept of Education, and Tribal Departments will meet monthly to coordinate the school programs with the extended learning and career readiness initiatives. The intent is to establish a network of support for the youth and future generations of leaders.

Target Population. The project focuses on improving college and career readiness for 2,552 junior high and high school students and future generations who are members of the GRIC and SCAT.

Services to be provided. *Invest* focuses on ensuring the participating youth develop a career identity, are academically prepared, possess the resiliency needed to overcome challenges, and have and follow a college and career plan that results in personal and professional success. This involves Tier 1 services (universal) for all, Tier 2: Targeted services for groups of students; and Tier 3 intensive support for individual students. These services will be supported by both *Invest* and local school community staff.

Proposed Activities. Proposed activities include; appropriate grade level college and career awareness and planning activities, presentations, and counseling activities and increased access to college courses provided by ASU, and summer learning programs involving real world project-based learning. All these activities will include a cooperative learning focus geared at developing the skills needed for 21st century jobs.

Anticipated results. Increase the number of youth who are prepared for professional and technical jobs that meet the 21st century workforce needs of these Tribal nations, thus creating greater economic, social, and cultural sustainability for their families and communities.

U.S. Department of Education

The Rural Postsecondary Education and Economic Development (RPED) Program

ABSTRACT

1. **Applicant Institution:** McDowell Technical Community College (Lead Applicant); Western Piedmont Community College (WPCC); Isothermal Community College (ICC)
2. **Project Title:** *Foothills F.O.R.W.A.R.D. – Facilitating an Occupation-Ready Workforce by Addressing Regional Demands*
3. **Partners:** Six regional employers (4 advanced manufacturing; 2 hospital systems); Foothills Workforce Development Board; Western Piedmont WDB; Foothills Regional Commission; Single Stop; TimelyCare; InsideTrack; North Carolina Community College System; myFutureNC; Belk Center for Community College Leadership & Research and DVP-PRAXIS
4. **Target Population:** Adult students; Student Services Staff; Faculty
5. **Services & Proposed Activities:** **Component 1:** Create a strong network of regional adult success coaches; **Component 2:** To create a strong regional network of critical student supports to enhance access to basic needs resources such as housing, childcare, transportation, health & wellness, and more; **Component 3:** To boost regional capacity for quality success coaching with professional learning that “trains the trainers” on best practices related to college preparation, awareness, application, selection, advising, counseling, and enrollment.
6. **Anticipated Results & Citations:** **Objectives 1.1-1.5.** Assign adult coaches in high-skill, high-demand programs; Increase percentage of students who meet with a coach; Increase enrollment; Increase transfer and credentials; increase WBL or employment; **Objectives 2.1-2.5.** Increase partners in regional basic needs repository; Increase referrals to basic needs services (Single Stop & TimelyCare); Increase students who complete pre-screening and referrals; Fewer students report concentrating on schoolwork due to financials. **Objectives 3.1-3.4.** Success coach trainers at each RPED college; Student services staff trained on success coaching; Awareness of basic needs services increases; Reported data capacity increased. **Selected Citations:** Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. (2011). Valentine, J.L. & Deal, S.A. (2023). Brinkerhoff, R.O. (2006).
7. **Absolute Priorities Addressed:** Yes. Each institution serves rural students. Project is focused on increasing access and completion for more rural adults. **Addresses Invitational Priority 2:** Partnering with workforce agencies, regional employers and nonprofit, InsideTrack.
8. **CPP Addressed:** Yes. The project focuses on regional coordination among three rural community colleges to build regional capacity to grow enrollment, completion rates, and attainment levels for rural adults, contributing to workforce development for high-skill, high-demand career pathways (advanced manufacturing and trades; allied health/nursing).

NCES Locale Codes: (McDowell, Burke, Rutherford, and Polk) is designated overall by the NCES Local Code 41 – Rural Fringe. Each college has main campuses and/or sites located in NCES Local Codes as follows: MTCC - 41, Rural Fringe; WPCC - 42, Rural Distant; and ICC - 32, Town Distant.

Abstract

The University of New Mexico–Valencia (UNM-V) is a public, two-year branch campus Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Los Lunas, NM. UNM-V is the only community college serving a large rural area in Valencia and Socorro Counties, located 30 miles south of its parent campus, The University of New Mexico–Main, Albuquerque.

The *UNM-V ENROLL Program* is a comprehensive initiative providing services to address challenges that rural students face accessing postsecondary education that will prepare them for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations. The *ENROLL* acronym stands for Early, Non-academic, Revitalize, Outreach, Learning support, and Learning through experience as expanded upon below.

Program services include: 1) Facilitating Early College Camps will prepare students for the fall start as first time college students. 2) Providing critical non-academic support services to students at UNM-V. Non-academic support areas include personal, financial, transfer, and/or social and behavioral health needs. 3) Revitalizing career and technical education (CTE) programs offered at UNM-V. 4) Establishing a regular schedule of outreach to local industry and K-12. Local industry outreach is key to identifying internship and scholarship opportunities for students. Outreach to K-12 will also be key to exposing students to their options for postsecondary education and to creating a seamless transition to college for these students. 5) Supplying learning support to current students through class embedded and assigned tutoring. 6) Presenting opportunities to students to learn through experience, specifically through Undergraduate Research (UR) and Internships.

The program will have measurable and significant outcomes including: (1) providing rural students direct student services supported by the grant; (2) increasing the annual enrollment of rural students; (3) increasing the transfer of rural students to a 4-year institution and/or obtaining a degree or certificate; and (4) increasing the number of rural students who obtain and internship or employment.

The *UNM-V ENROLL Program* will address **Absolute Priority 1: Rural Applicants** as a rural setting campus with the rural fringe designation as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The outcome of the project's six proposed services is to increase the number and proportion of underserved students who enroll in and complete postsecondary education programs through strategies related to college preparation/awareness, meeting non-academic needs, and supporting learning through tutoring and experiential learning meeting **Absolute Priority 2: Increasing Postsecondary Education Access, Affordability, Completion and Post-Enrollment Success**.

The *UNM-V ENROLL Program* fully incorporates **Competitive Preference Priority: Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change** by coordinating our efforts with agencies to address college readiness and workforce development. Belen Consolidated and Los Lunas Public Schools are the primary districts in the area and major partners in creating college ready students. BNSF Railways, Niagara Bottling, Presbyterian Health Plan, and Rio Grande Financial Network are current scholarship partners and are excited to partner with the project in offering internship opportunities to students.

Pitt Community College (PCC)
Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development (RPED) Project
Abstract

Target Population: PCC's RPED project will reach over 2,000 rural middle & high school students in Pitt County each year. The program will also serve students enrolled at PCC that graduated from rural high schools in Pitt and surrounding counties.

Services & Activities: Career coaching & exploration, academic coaching, pathways with stackable credentials, campus visits, college & financial aid application completion, wraparound service referrals, job & career fairs, industry presentations, tutoring, outreach to at-risk students, academic skills building, support for loss of learning due to COVID

Absolute Priorities (AP) Addressed: Yes 1(b) and 2(a, b, c, d, e, & f) AP1: PCC's RPED will service three rural high schools (NCES locale code 41) located near the college, as well as PCC students who graduated from other rural high schools. In the fall of 2023, 50% of PCC students attend or graduated from high schools with locale codes of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43. **AP2:** PCC's RPED will place a Career Coach in two high schools to work directly with students on career exploration and postsecondary preparation and enrollment. An Academic Coach will serve all incoming & current rural students at PCC to improve academic success, persistence, and completion. RPED staff will also work with various partners to connect students with additional resources to address any other academic, personal, or basic needs.

Competitive Preference Priority (CPP) Addressed: Both College Readiness and Workforce Development: PCC's RPED will work with a 20+ agency Community Partner network that is made up of federal, state, local, and community agencies to address student needs that impede their *college and workforce readiness, persistence, and success*.

Invitational Priorities (IP) Addressed: Yes Noted in the proposal as (IP1), (IP2), and (IP3).

Anticipated Results:

Rural students that receive services: 3000 50% of high school seniors (1000) will be counseled by the Career Coach; 25% of students in grades 8-11 (2000) will receive career exploration presentations and/or sessions from the Career Coach; 800 rural students will receive academic support from the Academic Coach, *some students may be duplicated from item 1*.

Change in the annual enrollment rate at PCC of rural students that receive services:

35% 4-year average of graduates enrolling at PCC (currently 29%); **25%** CCP enrollment at targeted high schools (currently 16%).

Number of participants that transfer to a 4-year institution or obtain a degree or certificate:

40% (400) Not all students that participate and enroll during the project period will have time to complete their degree or certificate *during the grant period*.

Number of participants who obtain an internship, apprenticeship, employment, or advancement: 35% (300)

ABSTRACT

1. **Applicant:** Chemeketa Community College, Regional Education and Academic Development Department, High School Partnership program
2. **Project title:** Chemeketa College-going Access and Regional Equity for Students (CARES)
3. **Partners include:** Amity, Cascade, Dayton, Falls City, Jefferson, McMinnville, North Marion, Lord, Perrydale, St Paul, Willamina, Yamhill Carlton School Districts; Juntos, Unidos, and Boys & Girls Club community based organizations
4. **Target Population:** 5539 rural high school students and their families, rural high school teachers
5. **Services and Proposed Activities:** expanding career and technical education dual credit courses; developing hybrid CTE and combined school enrollment models; implementing innovative technological improvements; enhancing advising and Bridge for transitions to college; and providing teachers with effective technology and professional development.
6. **Anticipated Results:** 561 will earn college credit during high school education, 4000 families will receive information about dual credit opportunities and the transition to college, 2,779 students will receive college going advising, career exploration, and campus tours, 120 teachers will receive professional development.
7. **Absolute Priorities Addressed:** This project directly serves 13 school districts with NCES locale codes of 32 or higher by providing culturally inclusive family outreach to engage more students in dual enrollment, increase offerings for rural high schools and expand the professional development of teachers.
8. **Competitive Preference Priority Addressed:** Yes. This project addresses the competitive preference priority by leveraging existing relationships with multiple supporting agencies and organizations to assist students in successfully completing college credits and transitioning to higher education.
9. The project addresses **all invitational priorities** by increasing secondary students' access to postsecondary education, supporting the development of academic programs with Career Pathways and supporting transition from community college to a 4-Year institution of higher education. The project increases targeted outreach, expands college and career connections, and provides advising and connections to college support for long term college success.

Abstract

- 1. Applicant Institution:** Voorhees University.
- 2. Project Title:** Strengthening Guided Pathways.
- 3. Proposed Partners:** Workforce Development – South Carolina Works. Technical Colleges - Denmark Technical College, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, Technical College of the Lowcountry, Williamsburg Technical College, and York Technical College. High Schools - Allendale-Fairfax High School, Denmark-Olar High School, Barnwell High School, Calhoun County High School, Chester Senior High School, Great Falls High School, Lewisville High School, Colleton County High School, Wade Hampton High School, Ridgeland-Hardeeville High School, Bethune-Bowman High School, Branchville High School, Hunter-Kinard-Tyler High School, North High School, Edisto High School, Lake Marion Technical School, OC5 Health Professions School, Orangeburg Wilkinson High School, C. E. Murray High School, Hemingway High School, and Kingstree Senior High School.
- 4. Target Population:** 522 High School Students, 2,470 College Students.
- 5. Services and Proposed Activities:** Transition from High School to College, transfer from 2-year institute to 4-year university, Dual Credits, Guided Pathways, Student Supports.
- 6. Anticipated Results:** Increase enrollment to 760 students, increase persistence to 91%, increase retention to 64%, 867 students gain an internship, co-op, or apprenticeship, increase 4-year completion rate to 42%, and increase placement rate in career or graduate program to 87%.
- 7. Absolute Priorities Addressed:** Yes. *Absolute Priority 1*- All 21 of the high schools, Voorhees University, and four of the five Technical Colleges are locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43. *Absolute Priority 2* –The addition of a High-School and Technical College Liaison with objective to increase enrollment of students in our service area who will develop a comprehensive plan to increase enrollment, enhance student readiness, and successful transition of incoming freshmen. The provision of dual credit courses increases the likelihood that a student will enroll in college. The provision of dual credit courses lowers the cost of college. Our objective to increase four-year completion will lead to quicker completion of college, saving the expense of a student’s fifth or sixth year. Dual credits can increase and speed the completion of college and can lead to a higher GPA and college success. Providing students with a well-defined, clearly articulated educational guided pathway increases the student interest, persistence, and probability of successfully completing a program of study.
- 8. Competitive Preference Priority Addressed:** Yes. A Technical College/High School Transition Specialist and Liaison and the Business & Workforce Development Liaison will focus on cross-agency coordination, community engagement to advance system change through the implementation of Guided Pathways. The Technical College/High School Transition Specialist and Liaison will develop and facilitate a seamless transition and integration process for incoming students. This liaison is responsible for fortifying existing partnerships and fostering new ones with regional Technical Colleges and High Schools. The Workforce Development the Business & Workforce Development Liaison will build, develop, and nurture relationships with regional employers and workforce development agencies; to include South Carolina Works (please see attached letter of support), to secure co-ops, internships, and apprenticeships. Through this collaboration the liaison will develop MOUs delineating the roles and responsibilities of the partnerships with businesses and workforce development.
- 9. Invitational Priorities Addressed:** Yes. *Invitational Priority 1:* A liaison will fortify existing partnerships and foster new ones with regional Technical Colleges and High Schools. *Invitational Priority 2:* Use of National Career Cluster Framework and Guided Pathways. *Invitational Priority 3:* The Technical College/High School Transition Specialist will facilitate a seamless transition and integration process for incoming students.

WIU Addressing Equity Gaps Among Rural Students (AEGARS) Abstract

Western Illinois University (WIU), located in Macomb, Illinois, proposes a project for Addressing Equity Gaps Among Rural Students (AEGARS)—a comprehensive Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development (RPED) project to promote rural students' postsecondary success. Macomb is designated as “town remote” (Locale 33), and most of our students are from other rural districts, including our six partnering districts: Beardstown Community Unit School District (CUSD, 33), Galesburg CUSD (32), Macomb CUSD (33), Moline CUSD (13), Monmouth CUSD (32), and Rushville CUSD (33) (*Absolute Priority (AP) 1*). We have requested letters of support from the following local employers: Archer Daniels Midland (ADM); John Deere; the City of Macomb; NTN Bower; and Vibrant Credit Union. The target population includes secondary students in our region and all WIU students with a special focus on rural underserved students, including Black, Latinx, undocumented, DACA, and first-generation students. The goal of AEGARS is to improve enrollment, retention, completion, and employment rates for our rural underserved students through activities that enhance equity and access to postsecondary education and career pathways. This will be accomplished through four objectives:

Objective (1) Increase enrollment rates for secondary students from 33% to 38%, including a 3% increase for rural underserved students by improving college readiness and access through cross-agency coordination with rural Local Education Agencies and the implementation of evidence-based and culturally relevant pedagogies and programming (*AP 1, AP 2, Competitive Preference Priority (CPP), Invitational Priority (IP) 1*). This will be achieved by (1) promoting dual enrollment opportunities for rural districts, (2) hosting overnight summer camps for 100 eighth-grade students, (3) hosting parent workshops to reduce barriers to college, (4) hosting teacher and counselor workshops to promote college readiness, and (5) hosting principal and school board workshops to improve the college-going culture (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Conely, 2007).

Objective (2) Increase first-year retention rates for all students from 59% to 65%, including a 3% increase for rural underserved students by improving support for incoming freshmen transitioning from rural high schools to a four-year institution through evidence-based activities and academic and career advising (*AP 1, AP 2*). We will achieve this by (1) developing a strategic plan for a holistic first-year retention model, (2) strengthening our peer mentorship program to support first-year Black and Latinx students (3) implementing culturally relevant professional development, and (4) adding two new First-Year Advising positions (Altieri, 2019; Walters, 2003).

Objective (3) Increase third-year persistence rates among all students from 61% to 65%, including a 3% increase for rural underserved students by developing an evidence-based and culturally responsive persistence program (*AP 1, AP 2*). This objective will be achieved by (1) deploying a Latinx Taskforce to improve the sense of belonging and self-efficacy of underserved students and (2) developing a strategic retention plan for students of color (Gorski, 2018; Tinto, 2017).

Objective (4) Increase post-graduation employment rates from 72% to 80%, including a 3% increase for rural underserved students by supporting workforce development and enhancing academic career pathways in rural culturally and linguistically diverse communities. (*AP 1, AP 2, CPP, IP 2*). Objective 4 will be achieved by (1) developing career pathway opportunities for students through career fairs, networking events, and direct connections with employer partners and (2) increasing recruitment initiatives for our education career pathway (Credé et al., 2017; Crumb et al., 2022; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014).

ABSTRACT

The *Degrees That Work Project* will boost retention, performance, and post-completion employment for the target population of students from rural secondary schools across the Western and Southern Tier regions of New York. Implemented by SUNY Alfred State College of Technology (ASC), the only public college of technology in rural western New York State, the project is located in a rural campus setting and will also serve regional counties in which the majority of schools have rural codes, thus meeting both *Absolute Priorities*. (Note: The project will serve rural school districts in the following counties: Allegany County, NY (18 of 18 schools have NCES locale codes of 33, 41, 42, 43), Cattaraugus County, NY (30 of 30 schools have NCES locale codes of 32, 33, 41, 42, 43), Steuben County, NY (26 of 34 schools have NCES locale codes of 32, 33, 41, 42, 43), and Potter County, Pennsylvania (10 of 10 schools have NCES locale codes of 42 and 43).

This project also addresses the *Competitive Preference Priority* (“Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination,” etc.) through partnerships and activities that involve Workforce Development and College Readiness. Through the former, the plan will prepare students for high-demand jobs through partnership with the Allegany County Industrial Development Agency; supporting the former, project partnerships with regional middle and high schools (including the Andover, Arkport, Canisteo-Greenwood, Hornell, Northern Potter, and Wellsville Central School Districts) as well as the Community Colleges of Appalachia (CCA), will offer early access to college preparation and career decision services. Additional ASC/partner activities include joint college prep and career exploration, ASC’s hosting of a conference focused on rural K-12 and postsecondary students’ college integration strategies, and partnering with CCA to provide on-campus training of the needs of rural students to ASC and K-12 faculty and staff. (Note: we request the additional 10 preference points for meeting the Competitive Priority.)

The project also addresses all three *Invitational Priorities*. For IP 1 (“Supporting Access,” etc.) the project will work with local rural school districts on dual- and early-enrollment activities, build a mobile learning lab, and offer joint career development projects in rural districts. IP 2 (“Supporting... Career Pathways”) is met through the project’s plans for a Career Pathway focus within college resources, promotion of a “Stay for 4” plan to help push two-to-four-year academic plans for interested rural students. IP 3 (“Supporting Transition From Community College,” etc.) is met through our proposed Transfer Career Pathways Coordinator services, focused on regional community colleges with monthly visits, transfer fair attendance, articulation agreements and early transfer credit evaluation (pre-enrollment) for rural students. Our activities and strategies are supported by research including that from Rosecrance’s “Rural Appalachian High School Students’ College-Going and STEM Perceptions, favoring the link between career exploration and the entry to well-paying careers, as well as research from Tinto and Karp showing the need for and link to navigation assistance for at-risk students to college retention and completion.

Among other project results, by the end of Year 4, ASC will engage 710 from rural schools in career exploration activities and events, 393 rural students will be enrolled, and ASC will retain 73.5% of rural students from the Fall 2026 First Time-Full Time cohort. With a total request of \$2,041,230 the Expenditure Per Student is \$734.78.

Abstract

Project Name: On Ramp Appalachia (On Ramp)

Institution and Eligibility: Appalachian State University (App State) – IHE

Local Education Agency (LEA) Partners and designated NCES locale codes: Ashe County Schools (41), Burke County Schools (41), Clay County Schools (43), Graham County Schools (43), Madison County Schools (41)

Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Partners: A-B Tech Community College, Tri-County Community College, Western Piedmont Community College, Wilkes Community College

State Agencies: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI), myFutureNC

National Organizations: Participate Learning, The Hunt Institute

Community-based Organization (CBO): High County Workforce Development Board

Grade Levels Served: 11th grade in high school through Sophomore in college (AA degree)

Priorities: Absolute Priority 1, Absolute Priority 2.b., Competitive Preference Priority

To address these priorities, On Ramp aims to drive success in college transitions by providing services and resources to rural students in western NC to enhance their college and career aspirations (CCA), college enrollment, and degree attainment. On Ramp will provide an individualized college and career transition program to underserved students in five rural NC districts including but not limited to students from low-income families and students of color. Five categories of collaborative partners will support students' progression through key postsecondary milestones and transitions, ensuring systemic, well-rounded community buy-in and support (state agencies, national organizations, LEAs, IHEs, CBOs).

Project Goals: This project has three goals to align with these priorities: (1) developing a comprehensive and individualized college transition program to promote college access and workforce development for underserved students in rural areas, (2) assisting the students who do not have college and career plans to identify their pathway to college and careers, and (3) increasing college persistence and completion rate.

Project Description: On Ramp's scaffolded, individualized structure with four phases starts in the junior year (Phase 1) by providing scalable services to 1,977 rural 11th graders, customized to their interest. These services will be systematically directed to the most at-risk and underserved group of students by the end of the senior year (Phase 2), and then into community college (Phases 3 and 4). This results in a model that is not only systemic, but sustainable, and it ensures the greatest effort is targeted to the most at-risk students by providing the highest levels of support at the most opportune times. On Ramp's intervention model consists of six services with the use of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework serving as the intervention foundation: (1) Junior Workforce Connections Breakfast, (2) Junior Workforce Classroom Visits, (3) Career Exploration Fast Lanes, (4) Intensive College and Career Advising, (5) Summer Bridge Program, and (6) Continued Postsecondary Support.

Research Applications: Two practice guides with moderate to strong evidence included in What Works Clearinghouse Reviewed Studies Database are used to help build a strong foundation for the project: (a) designing and delivering career pathways at community college and (b) effective advising for postsecondary students. These two guides provide evidence-based recommendations for On Ramp activities. On Ramp hypothesizes that the intervention with the use of MTSS as a prevention-based framework can enhance students' postsecondary enrollment and completion. On Ramp aims to answer one primary research question by using logistic regression analysis: does On Ramp impact students' college enrollment and completion rate when controlling for group ($n = 1,977$ experimental students, $n = 1,977$ control students), gender, and initial CCA?

1. Applicant institution - Northern Illinois University, Highland Community College, Regional Office of Education #8

2. Project title – Room to Grow: A Partnership to Improve Education to Workforce Pathways for Students from Rural Communities in Northwestern Illinois

3. Proposed partners for the purpose of meeting the priorities --NIU, HCC, ROE, ISAC, IL Ed to Career Success Network, P-20 Network, NWILED, Greater Freeport, high schools, Career Centers

4. Target Populations- NIU Admin, Faculty & Students, HCC Admin, Faculty & Underserved Rural Students, ROE #8 Staff, High School – Admin, Staff & Rural Underserved Students

5. Services and Proposed Activities – Employ collective impact across community partners for workforce development; Create comprehensive student supports system at HCC; Align faculty for guided pathways from High School (dual credit) to HCC to NIU; Implementation of High School College and Career Pathway Endorsements and PaCE College and Career Exploration Framework (to HCC and NIU); Deepen Diversity, Equity and Inclusion knowledge and application across all partners; Measure all impacts; Drive sustainability.

6. Anticipated Results

- a. Increased rural postsecondary education access, affordability, completion, and post-enrollment success to and through HCC (Barnett, et al, 2012; What Works Clearinghouse, 2022)
- b. Strengthened cross-agency coordination/community engagement as a Leadership Community for systemic change and ensure sustainability (Illinois Ed to Career Success Network, 2023)
- c. Secondary students’ access to and preparation for postsecondary education by implementing PaCE Framework & Career Pathway Endorsements. (Boroch & Hope, 2009; Murphy et.al, 2010)

7. Absolute Priorities Addressed: Yes to both

Abs #1 – All high schools and HCC in the project are 32, 33, 41, 42, 43

Abs #2- Attained through HCC Transitional instruction (access without dev ed), dual credit and Career Pathway Endorsements (affordability), guided pathways to and through (completion), HCC comprehensive support system including diverse student mentors (post-enrollment success)

8. Competitive Preference Priority Addressed: Yes to both

College Readiness – Illinois Student Assistance Commission, Illinois P-20 Network
Workforce Development – Northwestern IL Economic Development and Greater Freeport Partnership (Chamber, Tourism, Main Street and Economic Development)

9. Invitational Priority or Priorities Addressed: Yes to all three

Inv #1 – The Illinois Student Assistance Commission and ROE will implement the Postsecondary and Career Exploration (PaCE) Framework for K-12 students

Inv #2 – HCC and ROE will establish College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPEs) in all high schools– these require work-based learning, dual credit and internships/apprenticeships

Inv #3 – HCC and NIU will create guided pathways (updated 2+2 agreements) in areas prioritized by the community as economic development careers in high-need, high-wage jobs

Program Abstract - Morehead State University (KY) Level UP STEM project an RPED FIPSE Grant

Project Overview - RPED funding will provide Morehead State University (MSU) with the resources to implement a project that will serve both rural high school students and postsecondary students with a career pathway into high-skill, high-wage, in-demand industry sectors and occupations throughout rural Appalachian/eastern and northeastern Kentucky. The project will assist high school students to enroll in college and provide internships and career opportunities to postsecondary students.

The project addresses both Absolute Priorities (AP). In **AP 1**, all identified secondary schools are located in NCES locale codes 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43. In **AP 2** the project meets qualifying items B, C, D, E, & F. The applicant, Morehead State University, is a rural Institution of Higher Education (NCES locale code 33). **The project addresses both parts of the Competitive Preference Priority and 2 Invitational Priorities.** *Details of how the project meets absolute, competitive, and invitational priorities can be found on pp 1-3 of the narrative & CPP 1-3.*

The **goals, objectives and outcomes** are: **Goal 1:** To increase the number/percentage of rural eastern Kentucky students who enroll in, persist and graduate with a college degree. **Objective 1A:** To provide college and career advising for 500 rural students to enroll in college. **Outcome 1A:** 80% of high school participants will successfully enroll in postsecondary education in the Fall term following high school graduation. **Objective 1 B:** To provide college and career school based or virtual sessions to high-school students to support them in pursuing a high skill/high wage/in demand career as they transition to college. **Outcome 1 B:** 80% of high school participants who enroll in postsecondary education will declare a major that supports a high-skill, high-wage, in-demand career in the Fall following high school graduation. **Goal 2:** To develop a pipeline of STEM career pathways for rural students through an internship program and career competency program. **Objective 2 A:** To design and implement professional hands-on learning opportunities that build on knowledge and skills in high-skill, high-wage, in-demand careers. **Outcome 2A:** 90% of project participants who enroll at MSU will complete an internship or be employed in a high-skill, high-wage career area. **Objective 2 B:** For students to attain competency in essential career skills: communications, professionalism, critical thinking, and teamwork. **Outcome 2 B:** 80% of participants who graduate from Morehead State University will graduate with career skill distinctions recognized at commencement and noted on their college transcript.

Proposed services and activities (overview): **High School:** college admissions and financial aid information dissemination and application assistance, career exploration, wrap around services, college and career visits and college orientation. **Collegiate:** career exploration, internships, courses with career competencies, STAR method and career competency certification.

Rural Pathways to Success • Abstract

1. **Applicant institution and partner institutions:** University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (**Penn GSE**), applicant; Partners: **Thinkist PBC**, various **Intermediate Units** across the state of Pennsylvania (which will help recruit rural districts and schools), and the **Pennsylvania Department of Education**, on behalf of their rural/remote schools.
2. **Project title:** Rural Pathways to Success
3. **Proposed partners for the purpose of meeting the priorities:** Penn GSE, Thinkist PBC
4. **Target Population:** Middle and high school students, grades 6-8 and 11-12 in rural Pennsylvania
5. **Services and Proposed Activities:** Recruit and train high-performing students in grades 11 and 12 to serve as tutors to low-performing students in grades 6-8
6. **Anticipated Results:**
 - Short-term Outcomes:** Increase access to quality tutoring services for rural students; Provide 3 hours of college credit for tutors successfully completing each level of tutoring (I and II); Promote equitable learning spaces by applying socioemotional learning techniques and monitoring their impact on students' experience; Increase middle school students' self confidence in math; Ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement of the **Rural Pathways to Success** program.
 - Intermediate Outcomes:** Tutors and tutees develop improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills; Students demonstrate higher achievement in math, as measured by grades, standardized assessments, and/or ACT/SAT; Improved social emotional learning outcomes, e.g. confidence.
 - Long-term Outcomes:** Increase the number of rural students enrolled in postsecondary education within 2 year of high school graduation; Tutors and tutees are competent and confident in their abilities and careers, and aid in the growth and development of their communities; Students pursue more careers requiring math, e.g. business and STEM; Students pursue more teaching careers; return to their communities to teach, closing of equity gaps in the education profession; Development of impactful connections between schools: tutors, tutees, educators, and others who use the program.
7. **Absolute Priorities Addressed: Yes – AP1 – Rural Applicants:** Project participants will be drawn from multiple districts and schools with locale codes of 32, 33, 41, 42, and 43. All project activities will take place online (with some optional in-person activities) to facilitate remote participation. **AP2: Increasing Postsecondary Education Access, Affordability, Completion, and Post-Enrollment Success:** Penn GSE will provide 3 college credits to all high school students (tutors) who complete Level I of the Thinkist tutoring training and performance. The program will also provide two online college readiness and preparation activities each semester (spring and fall) throughout the funding period, accessible to all rural students across the state.
8. **Competitive Preference Priority Addressed: Yes - Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement To Advance Systemic Change** – The full program will engage Penn GSE and partner institutions as described in #1, above.
9. **Invitational Priority or Priorities Addressed: Yes - IP 1: Supporting Secondary Students To Access Postsecondary Education** - Through its focus on training and supporting **1,840 peer tutors** in grades 11 and 12 to impact **3,680 tutees** in grades 6-8 and **an additional 16,000 rural secondary school students** across rural Pennsylvania, **Rural Pathways to Success** is designed to provide long-term academic relationships and exposure to postsecondary opportunities to students as early as middle school to support them through their transition to high school and then to postsecondary education. The entire project is grounded in evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, including expanded learning time.

ABSTRACT

The Elizabethtown Community and Technical College (ECTC) Advanced Manufacturing Accelerator Project (AMAP) grant aimed at promoting career opportunities in high-demand, high-wage jobs, specifically positions in advanced manufacturing. The project staff will work with middle schools, high schools, adult learners, community leaders, economic development organizations, and beyond to foster education and engagement opportunities to learn about the current manufacturing environment. This project recognizes the importance of improving the skills in this field to drive economic growth in rural communities. By providing targeted resources, educational programs, and industry partnerships, the grant aims to accelerate the development of a qualified and competitive workforce and improve a skilled pipeline for the current shortage and make improvements for both the short-term and long-term.

The project's primary objective is to increase education and awareness and engagement among learners about the diverse and promising career pathways available in advanced manufacturing. Through strategic collaborations with local school districts in Breckinridge, Grayson, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, and Washington Counties, industry partners, economic development partners, and community organizations, the grant will implement a comprehensive approach to career exploration and preparation. This includes the delivery of specialized curricula, more dual credit opportunities, hands-on training programs, job shadowing opportunities, internships for students, externships for teachers and staff, and summer programming opportunities.

Furthermore, the AMAP seeks to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities in accessing advanced manufacturing employment. It aims to bridge the gap by leveraging technological advancements such as exposure to real-world workplace environments, internships, and apprenticeship programs. These experiential learning opportunities will enhance their skills, increase their employability, and strengthen the overall talent pipeline for the manufacturing sector in rural areas.

The anticipated outcomes of the AMAP include increased enrollment in ECTC's advanced manufacturing programs, increased retention in the advanced manufacturing programs, increased academic achievement with completion of a certificate, diploma, associate degree, or transfer to a 4-year institution, and ultimately a successful job placement in manufacturing. The project's success will be measured through data-driven metrics, including learner participation rates, skill development, and employer and student satisfaction.

Overall, the ECTC AMAP aims to revolutionize rural postsecondary economic development by providing middle schools, high schools, and adult learners with the necessary resources and opportunities to excel in advanced manufacturing careers. By nurturing talent, fostering industry partnerships, and empowering rural communities, the project seeks to drive economic growth, create sustainable jobs, and enhance the overall prosperity of rural communities in our region.

Abstract

1. Institution: Big Sandy Community & Technical College (BSCTC), 1 Bert Combs Drive, Prestonsburg, Kentucky 41653 (Town: Remote).

2. Project title: Coaching, Advising, and Resources for Educational Success (CARES) Center(s) and Pathways, Access, Support, and Success (PASS) Initiative.

3. Proposed partners: AppalRed Legal Aid, the Christian Appalachian Project, East Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP), Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, Mountain Comprehensive Care, and Shaping our Appalachian Region (SOAR).

4. Target Population (e.g., faculty, staff, students): The target population for this project includes all students at BSCTC, with a particular focus on first-time, full-time credential-seeking students entering in the fall of 2023 and high school seniors with prior college credit (dual credit) through the PASS Initiative.

5. Services and Proposed Activities: BSCTC proposes to restructure its current student advising structure by reimagining the role of advisors and implementing strategies to support students in navigating their chosen pathways effectively. BSCTC will utilize RPED funding to transform its advising structure by implementing Guided Pathways, which involves reimagining the role of advisors and providing effective strategies to support students in their chosen pathways. The key activities under the CARES Center(s) include forming student learning and advising communities for eight career pathways, implementing career-focused, case-managed intrusive advising and faculty co-advising strategies, developing a wraparound service hub within the CARES Center(s), establishing career-focused outreach connections and transition services through the PASS initiative, leveraging Handshake®, community resources, and job fairs to create student-centered employment services, and collaborating with employers, industry partners, and community organizations to provide students with career development opportunities.

6. Anticipated Results (e.g., learning outcomes) and citations: BSCTC aims to improve college access, increase student persistence, enhance course completion rates, and ultimately boost overall student graduation rates in the five-county service area. The focus will be on creating pathways, facilitating transfers, and establishing community partnerships that align with BSCTC's vision for rural students in the eastern Appalachian region.

7. Absolute Priorities Addressed: Yes – focused on rural students' postsecondary access, affordability, completion, and employment or transfer.

8. Competitive Preference Priority Addressed: Yes - includes interagency and community engagement.

9. Invitational Priority or Priorities Addressed: Yes – includes high school outreach focused on transitioning to postsecondary education (Priority #1), creating a career pathway advising structure (Priority #2), and supporting employment and transfer advising (Priority #3).

Abstract

Many rural students in North Alabama face challenges in accessing postsecondary education and high-paying careers. As part of its efforts to increase access to educational and career opportunities for rural students in North Alabama, Athens State University proposes the All Roads Lead to Athens project (ARLTA) to meet the needs of its rural students. The project aims to increase access to postsecondary education and high-quality career tracks for rural students in the area. This project will leverage instructional technology, comprehensive wrap-around student support, and innovative educational outreach strategies to provide rural students with flexible and accessible learning opportunities to help them to succeed in postsecondary education and high-paying careers. Through partnerships with school counselors, community colleges, and community partners, ARLTA proposes to impact over 5,000 rural secondary, community college, and adult learners. Included in the proposal are well-defined timelines for implementation, reporting structures, and data collection methods which will document how well Athens State achieves its project goals and which project components were the most impactful on increasing the recruitment, retention rates, and graduation rates of rural students.

Hazard Community and Technical College Guided Pathways to Success: Check Your GPS Abstract

- 1. Applicant institution:** Hazard Community and Technical College
- 2. Project title:** Guided Pathways to Success: Check Your GPS
- 3. Proposed partners for the purpose of meeting the priorities:** Schools: Breathitt County, Breathitt County ATC, Buckhorn, Cordia, Hazard Ind, Jackson City, Knott County, Knott County ATC, Lee County, Lee County ATC, Leslie County, Leslie County ATC, Owsley County, Perry County, Red Bird Mission, Wolfe County. EKCEP, Inc., LKLP, CAC, Inc., Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, Family Resource and Youth Service Centers, four-year educational institutions, Commonwealth Education Opportunity Center, and Department of Education’s Upward Bound and Gear Up Programs.
- 4. Target Population** 1,350 9th-12th graders and 165 fully online first-time students.
- 5. Services and Proposed Activities:** HCTC will implement a secondary to post-secondary transition program including Dual Credit Hubs at each high school and area technology center consistently staffed by HCTC dual credit staff including new college navigators which will provide clear guided pathways, assist with connecting students to tutoring through our success zone, access to credit bearing academic courses, provide college, career, and civic preparation services, including transfer, and offer HCTC Promise and other scholarship opportunities. Additionally, HCTC will implement an online support system which will provide wrap-around services, incentives, tutoring, and focused intrusive coaching and advising for online students. Through cross-agency coordination listed above, HCTC will provide targeted students with access to workplace and civic preparation and skills training. HCTC will deliver professional development for faculty and staff focused on the unique needs of rural students including dual credit, online retention best practices, pedagogy, and transfer.
- 6. Anticipated Results (e.g., learning outcomes) and citations:** Increase dual credit senior matriculation to HCTC from 33% to 50% in four years. Decrease the number of high school graduates who do not attend any post-secondary institution from 51% (145/282) to 40% over four years. Increase fall to spring retention for online-only first-time students from 61% to 67% over four years. (years 2-4) Increase three-year completion rates of the Fall 2023 first time online-only cohort from 33% (Fall 2019 baseline) to 36% in Fall 2026; and Fall 2024 first time online-only cohort from 36% to 39% in Fall 2026.
- 7. Absolute Priorities Addressed:** AP1 - All schools are rural. AP2 – Affordable and accessible options for underserved rural students providing retention supports with individualized attention and career readiness including internships and apprenticeships.
- 8. Competitive Preference Priority Addressed:** Yes, HCTC will partner with its Workforce Investment Partner and the local community action council to support college and workforce readiness.
- 9. Invitational Priorities Addressed:** IP1 – Yes, Secondary to Post-secondary Transition activities including transfer to four-year institutions. IP2 – Yes, Strong partnerships with Workforce, social support non-profits and employers. IP3 – Yes, UCM supporting transfer to four-year colleges and universities in collaboration with dual credit and CEOC.

ABSTRACT

Columbia State Community College (CSCC), a public two-year college in southern Middle Tennessee serving eight rural counties, with campuses located in four of the counties. Maury County is one of the eight rural counties and is the home of the Columbia campus for CSCC. Columbia State proposes to serve Maury County Public Schools (MCPS), NCES District ID 4702760, which has a locale code of 41. Targeted schools include three high schools and three rural K-12 unit schools, all with a qualifying locale code: Columbia Central High School (32), Spring Hill High School (41), Culleoka Unit School (42), Mt. Pleasant High School (32), Hampshire Unit School (42), and Santa Fe Unit School (42). MCPS has no federal or state supported college access programs.

CSCC's overall goals are 1) Increase enrollment, persistence, and retention from underserved populations at targeted schools, and 2) Increase the number of underserved student populations from targeted schools entering the workforce after completing high school or an AAS degree, certificate or diploma. Project objectives are:

Objective 1: By September 30, 2027, increase underserved populations college-going rate from targeted high schools by 25%.

Objective 2: By September 30, 2027 decrease the number of underserved students from each targeted school earning zero credit hours in the first semester by 25%.

Objective 3: By September 30, 2027, increase student semester by semester (fall-to spring) persistence rate by 25%.

Objective 4: By September 30, 2027, increase student retention (fall-to-fall) of underserved population from targeted schools by 25%.

Objective 5: By September 30, 2027, increase degree or certificate completion rates of underserved students from targeted schools by 15%.

Objective 6: By September 30, 2024, establish a baseline number of students from underserved populations from targeted schools entering the desired career field.

Objective 7: By September 30, 2027, increase the number of underserved populations from targeted schools having work-based experiences by 25%

Columbia State is requesting **\$2,007,255** over four years in federal funding from the Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development program to support the following tasks and methods: Employ RPED Project Director and Staff and implement project; Monitor college-going, retention, persistence, and completion rates; Implement structure pathways for individualized student planning for post-secondary entry; Enroll all underserved populations in at least one dual enrollment course; Provided opportunities to participate in college visits, summits, and career exploration; Coordinate orientation and registration events for targeted graduates; Remain a resource for wrap-around post-secondary supports until completion and/or transfer; Assign a care team for each student attending CSCC and partner institutions; Provide career assessments prior to high school and college graduation; Establish job shadowing and internship opportunities to both secondary and post-secondary students; Provide speakers' bureau of industry-aligned speakers and job-site visits to secondary partners; Coordinate job searches, resume and interviewing skill building for both secondary and post-secondary students; Coordinate career and job fairs; and Enhance job placement postings through Handshake.

Both Absolute Priorities are met, and the Competitive Preference Priority is addressed.

Abstract

- 1) Applicant Institution:** Vermont Technical College - becoming Vermont State University (VTSU) through a merger with Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College on July 1, 2023
- 2) Project Title:** *Rural Opportunity and Development [ROAD] to Success.*
- 3) Partners:** Vermont Agency of Education, Community College of Vermont (CCV), Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, TRIO Student Support Services and McNair Scholars programs, Vermont State University (VTSU) Workforce, Community & Economic Development, Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation, and Office of Career Development and Innovation.
- 4) Target Population:** Vermont is the most rural state in the United States, according to the 2020 Census, with 65% of the population living in rural areas. The *ROAD to Success* project will serve rural Community College of Vermont transfer students and VTSU undergraduates from rural Vermont high schools at four rural campuses: Castleton, Johnson, Lyndon, and Randolph.
- 5) Services Provided and Proposed Activities:** 1) CCV transfer students from rural campuses will have new flexible career pathways to high-wage and high-need occupations, success advising, 24/7 remote tutoring, access to paid experiential learning, assistance with college, financial aid, and scholarship applications, and technology to enroll in credit-bearing hybrid/online courses at VTSU. 2) VTSU undergraduates at any of our four rural campuses will have new flexible career pathways to high-wage and high-need occupations, success advising, 24/7 remote tutoring, career development, and access to paid experiential learning opportunities, particularly for in-demand industry sectors and occupations in Vermont. 3) VTSU faculty and staff will have access to professional development designed to meet the needs of rural students and increase faculty and staff skills in creating digitally accessible, flexible, hybrid and/or online courses and programs for students.
- 6) Anticipated Results:** As a result of *ROAD to Success*, rural student participants will experience increases in structured career pathway options, flexible courses and credentials, paid career engagement activities, and retention and graduation rates. Additionally, the Vermont economy will experience increases in skilled workforce for high-need occupations.
- 7) Absolute Priorities:** 1) Yes, VTSU is uniquely accessible to rural students on five campuses, four of which are located in rural areas and the majority of Vermont high schools and CCV campuses are located in rural areas as defined by NCES Locale Codes 32, 33, 41, 42, and 43. 2) Yes, *ROAD to Success* will address Absolute Priority 2 areas (a), (b), (c), and (d).
- 8) Competitive Preference Priority:** Yes, VTSU *ROAD to Success* will address the CPP: Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change to address college readiness and workforce development.
- 9) Invitational Preference Priority:** Yes, VTSU *ROAD to Success* will address IP 2: Supporting the Development of Academic Programs with Career Pathways and 3: Supporting Transition from Community College to a 4-Year Institution of Higher Education.

PITT PRSSIM PROJECT: RPED GRANT PROGRAM ABSTRACT

Applicant Institution: University of Pittsburgh

Project Title: Partners for Rural Student Success Impact and Mobility (PRSSIM) Project

Proposed Partners:

University of Pittsburgh: Office of Admissions and Financial Aid, Office of the Provost, and Pitt Information Technology; Bradford, Greensburg, and Johnstown Regional Campuses

Local Education Agencies (LEAs): McKean County- Bradford Area, Kane Area, Otto-Eldred, Port Allegany, Smethport Area; Cambria County- Cambria Heights, Central Cambria, Conemaugh Valley, Forest Hills, Glendale, Northern Cambria, Portage Area; Westmoreland County- Yough; Bradford County- Athens Area, Canton Area, Northeast Bradford, Sayre Area, Towanda Area, Troy Area, Wyalusing Area; Beaver County- Blackhawk, Riverside Beaver County, Rochester Area, South Side Area, Western Beaver County

Target Population: Rural low-income, first-generation Pennsylvania students from above LEAs

Services and Proposed Activities: The Pitt PRSSIM Project will take a *three-point approach* to improve student success and completion rates of rural students through the development of high-quality career pathways aligned with in-demand occupations in PA: 1) *admissions* recruitment and pre-college programming, 2) *student success* resources for rural students (internships, mentoring, online tutoring, academic coaching, academic success workshops, career prep, financial literacy, cohort programs, and cultural programming, and 3) scaling *technology* resources (degree and career exploration tools, mentoring platform, and certificate building).

Anticipated Results and Objectives:

Objective 1: Number of Rural Students Served	250 rural students will participate in pre-college programming and 650 in student success resources each year
Objective 2: Increased College Enrollment of Rural Students	Increase in college enrollment of rural students across all of Pitt campuses to 22% over grant cycle
Objective 3: Increased Rural College Student Retention	Increase in rural student retention (fall to fall) across all Pitt campuses to 89.3% over grant cycle
Objective 4: Increased Rural College Student Completion	Increase in rural student 4-year graduation rates across all Pitt campuses to 65.1% over grant cycle and; Increase in rural student 6-year graduation rates across all Pitt campuses to 73.1% over grant cycle
Objective 5: Increased Rural College Student Attainment of Internships	Increase the number of rural students who obtain a paid internship by 25 each year

Absolute Priorities Addressed: Yes

1. The Bradford (UPB) regional campus is an institution of higher education with rural campus setting (Town Remote 33); we also propose to recruit students with a concentrated effort in the LEAs of rural locale noted above across the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
2. The project will increase postsecondary access, affordability, completion, and success for underserved rural, first-generation, and low-income students by addressing areas: b, c, d, e, f with a focus on “academic coaching.”

Competitive Preference Priority Addressed: Yes; The project will take a systematic evidence-based approach to improving outcomes for underserved rural, first-generation, and low-income students in coordinating efforts with state, local and community organizations that support students to address both college readiness and workforce development.

Invitational Priority Addressed: No

Applicant: **Heritage University**

Project Title: **Pathways to Opportunity**

Partners: **Yakama Indian Nation, Local Healthcare Providers, Workforce/Economic Development agencies, University of Washington GEAR UP, 8 small rural and high-poverty school districts, 1 BIE Tribal School and community organizations.**

Target Population: **American Indian Native, Immigrant, Hispanic, Farmworker, low-income and first-generation high school, and college students. This includes reaching out to 7,384 students in the 8 high schools and 1 BIE Tribal School and training 240 nurses over the grant period.**

Services and Activities: Recognizing the critical shortage of nurses in our rural communities, this pathway aims to increase the number of trained diverse nurses. Using a **Grow Your Own** model, the project will reach out to local diverse high school students, prepare them for college, recruit them in the university's nursing program and assist them in entering the workforce in high-wages and the high in-demand nursing local workforce.

We propose developing a career and college readiness pathway with various services, including dual enrollment, SAT/ACT prep, workshops, tutoring, financial aid guidance, mentoring, advising, and STEM summer bridge programs. We'll collaborate with our University of Washington GEAR UP partner and workforce partners. At our university, students will receive support from 2 Case Managers who offer NCLEX prep, advising, coaching, mentoring, career guidance, tutoring, time management workshops, placements, internships, and campus supports to ensure retention and graduation.

Anticipated Results: Our outreach efforts in the high schools will identify and support students interested in the nursing profession, guide and prepare them for college. The students that enroll in the university' nursing program and graduate will fill the workforce nursing needs of local healthcare providers and school districts. In the **next 5 years**, they need to hire **1,132** nurses and an additional **1,185** nurses within four healthcare partner organizations on the west side of Washington.

Competitive Preference Priorities 1: We are addressing this priority by engaging numerous partners in providing a range of **College Readiness** activities in the high schools. We are also providing a range of **Workforce Development** career employment and placement services at the university by project personnel.

Absolute Priority 1 & 2 being addressed: All target communities, schools and IHE are designated as rural by NCES locale codes: Mt. Adams (**42**), Toppenish (**32**), Yakama Tribal School (**32**), Grandview (**32**), Granger (**32**), Sunnyside (**32**), Wahluke (**41**), Wapato (**41**), Royal (**43**). Heritage University (IHE) is designated as **Rural: Fringe** by NCES College Navigator. Services to be provided will lead to increased postsecondary local accessibility, affordability, and enrollment in the university's nursing degree program.

Invitational Priority 1, 2 & 3 being addressed: The project will provide a range of services from secondary to postsecondary to the workforce (job placement). This will include working with community colleges to have their students transfer to our 4-year nursing program.