



**SHEEO**

State Higher Education  
Executive Officers Association



Dear Members,

We are excited to be writing today to announce a new opportunity for SHEEO members. Thanks to the generous support of a \$7,245,600 grant from Ascendium Education Group, SHEEO, in partnership with the Alliance for Research on Regional Colleges (ARRC) and HCM Strategists, will be launching the Rural Talent Development and Attraction Lab ("Rural Talent Lab") in five member states over the next four years. The goal of the Rural Talent Lab will be to develop a Statewide Plan for Rural Talent Development and Attraction that includes the establishment or expansion of middle-skill (i.e., sub-baccalaureate) credential pathways connected to the specific needs and assets of rural communities in the respective states and to ensure these pathways are career-connected, accessible, transparent, and as low-cost as possible.

The selected state teams will be supported in the design and implementation with robust analysis of data collected from public sources, rural community listening tours, and rural public-opinion surveys, along with intensive expert advising, in-person academies for co-learning, and funds supporting travel and technical assistance needs. Selected states will launch pathways in Fall 2027, and the project team will be conducting evaluative activities to inform state teams on future planning. Beyond the direct activities of the Rural Talent Lab, non-participating member states will have opportunities to participate in site visits, webinars, and other professional-learning events.

Now, you have the opportunity to apply for selection as one of the five inaugural states in the Rural Talent Lab. We will be hosting a webinar on **April 15, 2025, at 1:00pm (EDT)** to provide a detailed overview of the project and answer any questions interested states might have. Visit the [project overview page](#) to find the webinar registration link, as well as a detailed project description, Request for Applications, Application for states to complete, and Application rubric for state selection. **Applications will be due May 6, 2025 by 11:59 pm (EDT).**

We are excited about the possibilities this new partnership and project will bring, and we hope you will consider joining us on this journey. We look forward to sharing more with you during the webinar and reviewing your applications in the coming weeks.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Anderson".

Rob Anderson, Ph.D.  
President, SHEEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Koricich".

Andrew Koricich, Ph.D.  
Principal Investigator & Project Director, Rural Talent Lab  
Executive Director, ARRC