| **RURAL TALENT LAB**  **APPLICATION** |
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| **State** |  |
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| **Point of Contact** | Name:  Title:  Email: |
| **Assistant/Admin Contact** | Name:  Email:  Phone: |

**State Leadership**

1. Describe how your state has provided leadership for rural postsecondary talent development, explicitly reference positions in agencies, dedicated funding, cross-agency collaborations, special commissions, budget line items, etc.

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2. Please provide a statement on the permanent capacity that you would like to increase over the next four years for rural postsecondary talent development.

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**Rural Opportunities**

3. Which rural communities or regions in your state have the greatest opportunity to benefit from the Rural Talent Lab over the next four years and why do you want to work in those communities or regions? What do you think will be the greatest challenges for those communities or regions?

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4. Does your state currently have any rural-specific postsecondary initiatives in existence or being developed? Please describe how your state has the capacity to serve rural populations.

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5. What do you know about the perceptions that your rural communities have about postsecondary education in your state? In the communities you want to work with, specifically? How do you understand that?

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**Connections to Workforce/Industry**

6. What state policies and investments are in place that you envision wanting to leverage to be able to enroll students into new and/or existing pathways?

Minimally speak to state-level financial aid assistance, transfer policies, credit for prior learning (CPL) policies, and ability to remove barriers and coordinate resources across K-12, postsecondary, and workforce.

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7. Please name your state’s in-demand industries, provide evidence that they are in-demand and list the available jobs in those industries.

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8. Does your state have a Credentials of Value definition or policy? If so, please provide a description and/or link to this information.

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**Data**

9. Please describe your state’s current data capacity, data baseline, and data aspiration. Are there statewide metrics available to monitor that are disaggregated by rural communities or learners? How are those data collected and used?

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10. Does your state have any data and/or reports about rural communities, institutions, or learners?

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11. What are your aspirational goals to improve the use of data? Particularly for rural learners?

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12. How will your state use data to support selecting the region and institutions to scale these pathways?

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13. How will your state use data to track outcomes and transitions of students who participate in these pathways?

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14. What state and regional workforce data would be used to understand supply and demand? Rural communities and talent?

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15. What state and institutional data will be used to understand top priorities for pathways development and expansion?

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16. What cross-agency data will need to be used to support these pathways?

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17. What is your state and institutional capacity to collect and disaggregate non-credit course and learner information, including workforce outcomes?

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**Partnerships**

18. Improving sustainable state capacity for rural talent development is a major objective of the Rural Talent Lab. This requires collaboration across executive branch agencies and other state entities with a focus on rural workforce and economic development. Please list the positions, people, and/or entities that would be included on your state team.

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19. This project requires developing or expanding pathways over the next four years. Please list the positions, people, and/or entities that would be on your state team that would provide this expertise.

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**Selection Site Visit**

Prior to final selection, the project team will be conducting two-day site visits to the highest-scoring states for additional discussions. These visits will take place in May and June 2025. Please indicate dates in this period when your team would be available to host the project team, or alternatively, when your team is not available, should your state be selected for a site visit.

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**Selection Criteria**

Applications will be reviewed and scored by ARRC, SHEEO, and HCM staff. Scoring is based on the five Application question categories (State Leadership, Rural Opportunities, Connections to Workforce/Industry, Data, Partnerships). Reviewers will score the proposals based on the rubric below:

0 - No substantial demonstration

1 - Emerging: Newly created or minimal demonstration

2 - Developing: Growing and/or evolving demonstration

3 - Established: Advanced and/or robust demonstration

| **Category** | **Score (0-3)** | **Reviewer Notes** |
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| State Leadership |  |  |
| Rural Opportunities |  |  |
| Connections to Workforce/Industry |  |  |
| Data |  |  |
| Partnerships |  |  |
| **TOTAL SCORE** |  | |