Agenda

- Welcome
- What Is The Rural Talent Lab?
- What Will States Do?
- What Makes This Project Unique?
- Who Should Apply?
- Key Resources & Next Steps
- Q&A
- Closing Remarks

rural talent lab

Welcome

- Committed to rural postsecondary success
- Opportunity to drive economic mobility and workforce development
- Partners: ARRC, SHEEO, and HCM Strategists
- $7.25M grant from Ascendium Education Group

rural talent lab

Informational Webinar
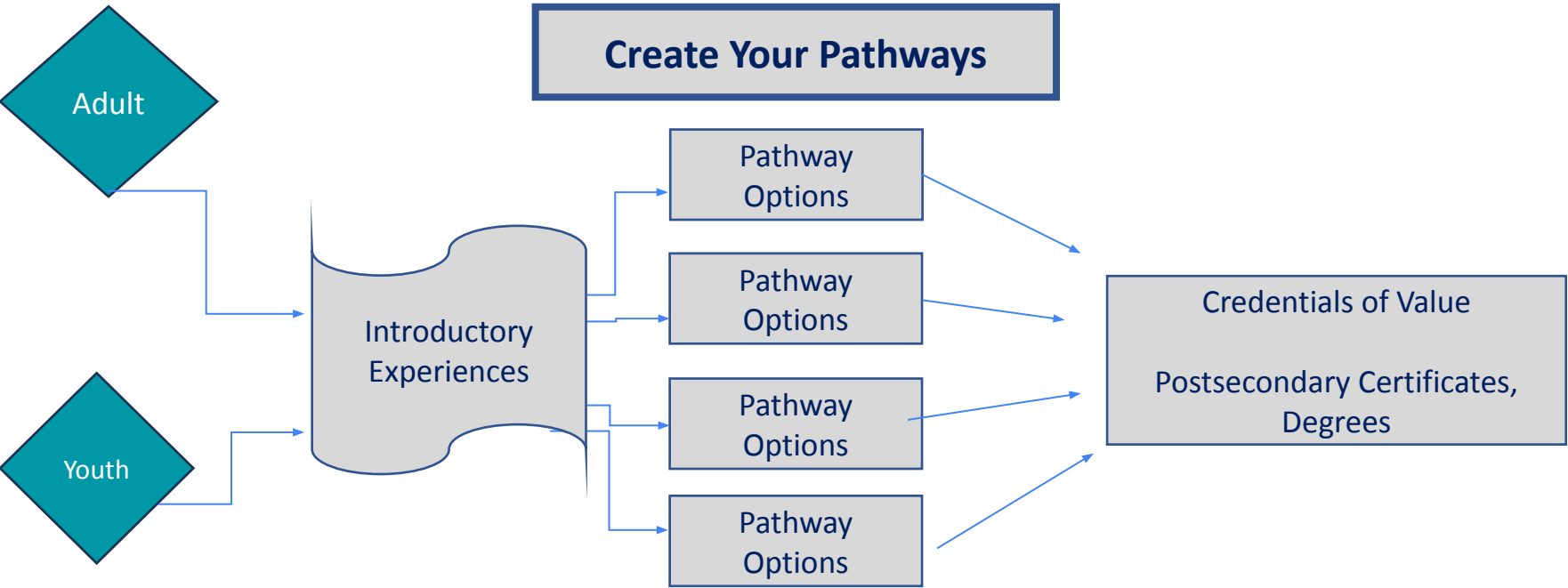
What Is The Rural Talent Lab?

What Is The Rural Talent Lab?

- **Vision:** Transforming rural postsecondary opportunities and community vitality through statewide planning.
- **Timeline:** Four-year initiative (2025-2029)
- **Key Goal:** Develop 4+ sub-baccalaureate pathways (i.e. associate's, certificate, microcredential) in five states that will enroll learners in Fall 2027

Components:

- Community listening tours
- Public opinion surveys
- Demographic, economic, and labor-market data analysis
- In-person learning academies
- Expert advising and coaching support
- Technical assistance and travel funds

rural talent lab

Middle Skills Pathway Opportunities

Create Your Pathways

Adult

Youth

Introductory Experiences

Pathway Options

Pathway Options

Pathway Options

Pathway Options

Credentials of Value

Postsecondary Certificates, Degrees

rural talent lab

High School   **Non-credit Training**   **Apprenticeship**   **Military**   **Colleges**   **Employers**

What Will States Do?

- Create a Statewide Plan for Rural Talent Development and Attraction
- Implement at least four, middle-skill credential pathways tailored to specific rural needs
- Engage directly with rural communities and stakeholders

Participate In:

- Community listening tours
- Four, in-person Academies (e.g., October 2025 at Appalachian State)
- Host site visits for non-selected states
- Support project evaluation activities
- Ongoing surveys to assess state teams' learning, as well as evolving state needs

rural talent lab

What Will States Do? State Participation Activities

- **Participate in community listening tours**
  - 4-5 stops across the state
  - Focus groups (designed by the research team) with a range of community stakeholders
  - Listening tour dates will be finalized in October 2025
- **Attend four in-person Academies**
  - 2 days, 3 nights per Academy
  - First Academy: October 28-29, 2025 at Appalachian State University
  - Remaining Academy dates and locations (in selected states) will be finalized by the first Academy
- **Hosting site visits for non-selected states**
  - 1-2 days for conversations to help non-selected states determine their readiness for a future cohort
  - Travel for visiting states will be covered by the Rural Talent Lab
- **Support program evaluation activities**
  - Periodic surveys of selected state teams
  - Pathway Participant Survey

rural talent lab

What Will States Do? Support for Selected States

- Up to $100,000 technical assistance funding
  - Administered by ARRC through a pre-approval/reimbursement process
- $25,000 travel support
  - Lump-sum payment to cover travel to Academies, etc.
  - Listening tour costs will be covered separate from this amount
- Dedicated and intensive advising
- Robust data collection and analysis
- Program evaluation
- National visibility opportunities

rural talent lab

Informational Webinar

What Makes This Project Unique?

What Makes This Project Unique?

- Community-first model emphasizing rural assets
- Values rural lived experience and expertise
- Rejects deficit narratives about rural people and places
- Affirms rural self-determination
- Not focused on campus mergers, consolidations, or closures
  - Emphasizes right-sizing, capacity-building, and sustainability
- Intentional knowledge dissemination
- Learning exchange with non-participant states
  - Encourage other states to undertake this work in the future

rural talent lab

Informational Webinar

Who Should Apply?

Who Should Apply?

- Statewide planning teams
- Organizations with associate degree, undergraduate certificate, and/or microcredential programs
- Entities with the capacity to collaborate across:
  - Postsecondary and K-12 education sectors
  - Workforce development
  - Economic development

rural talent lab

Key Dates

- **Application Deadline:** May 6, 2025, 11:59 PM (EDT), submitted to **ruraltalentlab@gmail.com**
- **Finalists Notified:** May 23, 2025
- **Site Visits for Finalists:** June 2025 (1-1.5 days per finalist)
- **First Academy:** October 28-29, 2025 at Appalachian State University

rural talent lab

Application Overview

- Application components
- Selection criteria and rubric
- Tips for competitive applications

rural talent lab

Informational Webinar

Key Resources

Key Resources

- Request for Applications
- Application Form
- Project Backgrounder
- Letter of Interest
- Project Overview Page: https://sheeo.org/project/rural-talent-lab/

rural talent lab

Informational Webinar

Q & A

Closing Remarks

Application Deadline: May 6, 2025 at 11:59 PM (EDT)

Submit Applications to ruraltalentlab@gmail.com

rural talent lab
development & attraction

ruraltalentlab.org | @ruraltalentlab.bsky.social