**Rural Guided Pathways Project — Phase Two**

**Overview and Application**

NCII invites community colleges to apply for Phase 2 of the Rural Guided Pathways Project. Applications, including signed participation agreements, are due **December 6, 2024.**

To apply, complete the application and participation agreement. Email both documents to Sarah Cale at the National Center for Inquiry & Improvement (NCII), [sarah@ncii-improve.com](mailto:sarah@ncii-improve.com), by close of business on **December 6, 2024.**

For more information, including details about the program’s professional development and support, the selection process and criteria, and key dates, visit <https://ruralguidedpathways.org/>.

**Overview**

Phase 2 of Rural Pathways is a three-year project in which a national cohort of up to 32 rural community colleges will work with each other — and with community partners in their regions — to implement evidence-based, institution-wide reforms grounded in the guided pathways framework. Participating colleges commit to:

* Designing and implementing a better student experience at their colleges.
* Ensuring that more students earn credentials and move on to living-wage jobs or transfer to a four-year institution with junior status.
* Collaborating with key stakeholders in their regions to increase economic opportunity in the region and be partners in the implementation of a cross-sector approach to guided pathways.
* Implementing evidence-based reforms that will address inequity and lead to improved educational and workforce outcomes.

Rural Pathways is unique in two ways:

**1. Rural focus.** It is the first time a pathways Institute structure is focused specifically on the needs of rural institutions.

**2. Community partners.** It is the first time community partners are deeply embedded in pathways implementation.

The Rural Guided Pathways is funded by Ascendium Education Group, The Ford Family Foundation, and the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies as well as a group of national and regional philanthropies. Applications are due **December 6, 2024.** Following a selection process led by NCII and including national partners, up to 17 new institutions will be selected for participation with 15 colleges from Phase 1. The project begins in spring 2025 and ends in December 2027.

The Rural Guided Pathways Project curriculum includes six Institutes over three years, site visits, and virtual consultation. Each college also has a designated coach and will participate in leadership team training led by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. NCII will provide project leadership and build on longstanding partnerships with the Community College Research Center and the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program to support participating colleges. Other partners will bring additional content expertise as the team develops the curriculum and materials.

**Application**

**Part One: College Information**

Note: Only two-year public institutions are eligible.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Institution name | |  |
| Institution address | |  |
| Contact person for this application | Name |  |
| Title |  |
| Email |  |
| Phone |  |
| Institution CEO | Name |  |
| Email |  |
| Phone |  |
| Length  of tenure |  |
| CEO’s assistant | Name |  |
| Email |  |
| Phone |  |

**Part Two: Application Questions** (Please limit responses to no more than 350 words per question.)

**1. This project is designed for colleges that are in rural communities or serve rural communities as part of their service region. Briefly describe your service area and your student population with a focus on your rural constituency. Please list the counties in your service area.**

**2. Has your institution participated in (a) any national or state-based student success reform initiatives and/or (b) any significant regional economic development/economic mobility initiatives? If so, please list each initiative and describe how that work affected the student experience at your institution.**

**3. Summarize your college’s experience with guided pathways to date. What discussions about guided pathways have taken place at your college? Have you begun implementing any guided pathways practices? If so, briefly describe two or three highlights of this work, including how the student experience has changed for students at your college.**

**4. Using the planning elements of the guided pathways framework, describe the work your college has engaged in to create the conditions for implementing guided pathways. Include information about the institutional research capacity at your institution and your institution’s IT capacity to support data use in planning, decision-making, and monitoring student progress.**

**5. Using the four implementation pillars of the guided pathways framework, describe the top two or three priorities that your institution might address as part of this project. In your response, explain what aspects of the student experience have been experienced inequitably by historically underserved students (e.g., students of color, students living in poverty, first-generation students, and displaced adults).**

**6. Describe the most significant opportunities and constraints on economic mobility for the people and the region your college serves. What role does the college play — or might the college play — in increasing the economic vitality of the region?**

**7. Describe the college’s existing partnerships in creating educational pathways to living-wage jobs and supporting economic mobility in the region. Highlight how a cross-sector pathways approach (i.e., involving K–12, community college, baccalaureate institutions, regional business and industry, and economic development organizations) could leverage existing regional efforts to increase economic opportunity.**

**8. Describe your college’s existing developmental education practices and highlight any reform efforts that the institution has implemented.** **Include the percentage of your incoming students who are required to take any developmental education courses and the percentage of your students who complete college-level English and college-level mathematics in their first year of enrollment.**

**9. Is there anything else we should know about your college or your community that would affect your college’s successful participation in the project?**