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**Rural Guided Pathways Project — Phase Two**

**Participation Agreement**

**Spring 2025 through December 2027**

To be completed by the college CEO. Please carefully review before signing.

Submit this signed document, along with your completed application, to Sarah Cale at the National Center for Inquiry & Improvement (NCII), [sarah@ncii-improve.com](mailto:sarah@ncii-improve.com), no later than December 6, 2024.

For more information about the Rural Guided Pathways Project, visit <https://ruralguidedpathways.org/>.

**Participation Agreement**

**YES, I understand and agree that participation in the Rural Guided Pathways Project involves specific and clearly articulated commitments, as delineated below. On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,** [name of institution] **I affirm that all participants from our institution will abide by these commitments:**

1. The college CEO will actively oversee the work with support from a designated **Rural Guided Pathways Project Lead.** This lead is a high-level cabinet officer (preferably the chief academic or chief student services officer), who will also serve as the primary institutional contact person for work related to this project. We are including the name of and contact information for our college’s Rural Guided Pathways Project lead on page 4 of this document.
2. The CEO will designate **five or six** **community partners who are committed allies in enhancing regional economic opportunity.** These community patners will participate in the project for its duration, including Institute participation (when content is relevant) and all in-person coaching visits. These community partners will be in *leadership positions* in their respective organizations or in the community, and they might include employers, economic development entities, transfer partners, K–12 institutions, community-based organizations, and others. The college **must** include leadership from K–12 partners and leaders from primary regional employers as community partners. The community partners will share an aligned vision of the potential of this work to increase economic opportunity in the region as well as be partners in the implementation of a cross-sector approach to guided pathways at our college. We are including names, titles, and contact information for each of our college’s community partners on page 4 of this document. (Stakeholders selected for this role will vary by college, but the common thread will be that community partners have the regional relationship capital to advance the project’s implementation efforts. A college may choose to bring different/additional community partners over the course of the project.)
3. Our institution will devote the time and talent needed to implement guided pathways *at scale* for all students. We understand that this work will require significant institution-wide change and will include curriculum and program mapping, aligned both to university transfer programs and to the labor market; reconfiguration of basic skills education as an accelerated and contextualized on-ramp to programs of study; ongoing advising and monitoring of student progress; integrated academic support and student services; holistic supports for students including student financial stability services; integrated approaches to active/experiential learning in every program of study; and alignment of co-curricular learning in each metamajor and program of study.
4. For each design and implementation task, we will focus strong attention on equity — both intentionally designing equitable student experiences and explicitly addressing barriers to equitable outcomes and institutional factors that perpetuate inequitable outcomes for students.
5. We will devote the necessary time and talent to planning and executing college-wide engagement in guided pathways design and implementation; needed and timely professional development for faculty, staff, and college leaders; and needed and timely technical assistance for the work.
6. We will use and regularly review the guided pathways momentum metrics that indicate student connection, early momentum through pathways, and completion. The metrics used for this project — which were identified by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University — include:

* Earned 6+ college credits in 1st term
* Earned 12+ college credits in 1st term
* Earned 15+ college credits in year 1
* Earned 24+ college credits in year 1
* Earned 30+ college credits in year 1
* Gateway (transfer-level) math and English completion Key Performance Indicators:
  + Completed transfer-level math in year 1
  + Completed transfer-level English in year 1
  + Completed transfer-level math and English in year 1
* Persistence Key Performance Indicators:
  + Persisted from term 1 to term 2
  + Year-to-year retention
* College course completion Key Performance Indicator:
  + - College-level course completion rate in students’ first academic year

We will collect theses metrics at the beginning, at the mid-point, and near the end of the project.

We will regularly complete the CCRC/NCII-developed ***Rural Pathways Cross-Sector Guided Pathways Self-Assessment,*** a qualitative instrument designed to measure progress on the scale of pathways practices implementation. We will identify three to four priority practices that we will work to implement over the course of the project. We will monitor our progress on these self-identified items and submit the Self-Assessment at the beginning, at the mid-point, and near the end of the project.

1. We will participate and fully engage in the virtual support events scheduled between the spring 2025 and fall 2027 terms, including our leadership team’s professional development, virtual consultancy sessions, topical webinars, Institute orientation sessions, and office hours with the college’s primary NCII coach as needed to support the work.
2. We will send a full eight-person team to actively participate in each of the six Institutes between March 2025 and October 2027 as laid out in the schedule below. **The College president and the Rural Guided Pathways Project lead/primary college contact will attend every Institute.** NCII will make recommendations for the composition of the remaining six members of our team for each Institute, which will include recommendations for including community partners. Our college will make the ultimate decision about who these six members of our team will be.

* Institute Schedule:
* *Institute #1: March 18–21, 2025 — New Orleans, LA*
* *Institute #2: October 28–31, 2025 — Louisville, KY*
* *Institute #3: March 11–13, 2026 — Pittsburgh, PA*
* *Institute #4: October 27–30, 2026 — Dallas, TX*
* *Institute #5: March 16–19, 2027 — Atlanta, GA*
* *Institute #6: October 26–29, 2027 — West Coast Location TBD*

1. We will coordinate with our college’s NCII Rural Pathways coach to set the agenda for one coaching visit to our college each year. **The College president and the Rural Guided Pathways Project lead/primary college contact will participate in each coaching visit and all other project support structures.**
2. Prior to each Institute, we will hold at least one meeting of the Institute team to review and discuss the assigned work. We will complete and submit structured advance work by the deadline prior to each Institute.
3. During each Institute, we will complete the working documents provided and identify next steps, timelines, and responsibilities for work on designing and implementing guided pathways for students. We will provide these documents to NCII project staff by the deadline provided at each Institute.
4. We will pay all travel expenses (air and/or ground transportation, plus dinners) for institutional team members who participate in the project Institutes. The Rural Guided Pathways Project will pay for **hotel rooms (two nights) for the college team as well as breakfast, lunch, and snacks during the Institute.**
5. Our college’s Rural Guided Pathways Project lead will participate in a pre-conference session during the morning of the first day of each Institute to prepare for the Institute.
6. Our college’s leadership team will participate in professional development, led by the Aspen College Excellence Program, over the course of the project.

**Rural Guided Pathways Project Lead**

Our college’s Rural Guided Pathways Project lead/primary contact for this project is:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Title** | **Email** | **Best phone number(s)** |
|  |  |  |  |

**Community Partners**

Our community partners for the Rural Guided Pathways Project are:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name** | **Title** | **Organization** | **Email** |
| 1. |  |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |  |  |

**Signatures**

     

Signature of College CEO Date

(electronic signature may be inserted above)

**Verification of discussion with and support of the college’s faculty leadership/academic senate/faculty union**

Signature of College Faculty Leadership Date

(electronic signature may be inserted above)

**Verification of discussion with and support of the college’s local governing board (if applicable)**

Signature of Governing Board Chair Date

(electronic signature may be inserted above)

**For additional information, contact the National Center for Inquiry & Improvement (NCII):**

Chris Baldwin, [chris@ncii-improve.com](mailto:chris@ncii-improve.com)

Gretchen Schmidt, [gretchen@ncii-improve.com](mailto:gretchen@ncii-improve.com)