

Nursing Apprenticeship and Pipeline Program

Webinar and Office Hours

June 13, 2023

Agenda

- Program Details
- Application Instructions
- Your Questions

Please see program and application documents online at <https://humanservices.vermont.gov/nursing-apprenticeship-pipeline-grant>

Program Details

Program Summary

The Agency of Human Services (AHS) is issuing this grant opportunity for Vermont health care employers per Act 183 of 2022 and Act 3 of 2023. The Health Care Employer Nursing Apprenticeship and Pipeline Grant Program provides funding to **establish or expand** partnerships with Vermont nursing schools to create nursing apprenticeship programs, pipeline programs, or both that will train members of the health care employers' existing staff to become higher-level nursing professionals.

The Grant Program's overarching goal is to enhance the state's health care capacity by increasing the number of higher-level nursing professionals in Vermont. The Grant Program explicitly responds to the state's long-standing shortage of nursing professionals, a problem that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Program Summary

Grant Program funds may be used to support health care employer efforts to establish or expand partnerships with Vermont nursing schools **to create or expand a nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program** and to **design, administer, and engage in sustainability planning** for such programs.

Grant Program funds may also be used to offset the **cost of tuition and fees** and to provide **support for living expenses for the Staff Participants**, who may pursue one or more of the following depending on the design of the program at a particular employer:

1. Practical Nursing (PN) certificate,
2. Associate of Science in Nursing (ADN) degree leading to eligibility for RN licensure
3. Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree

Program Summary

Grant Program funds will be disbursed in two funding rounds.

Round 1:

- Up to three years of funding
- Staff Participants must enter academic degree / certificate programs in the Fall 2023, Spring 2024, or Summer 2024 terms

Round 2:

- Up to two years of funding
- Staff Participants must enter academic degree / certificate programs in the Fall 2024, Spring 2025, or Summer 2025 terms

All Grant Program funds must be expended by **September 30, 2026**.

All individual Staff Participants must be working in higher-level nursing positions by **December 31, 2026**.

Eligible Employers

Eligible Employers are health care employers in Vermont.

- This includes but is not limited to hospitals, federally qualified health centers, primary care providers, long term services and supports (including long-term care facilities) providers, home health agencies, designated and specialized service agencies, and dental providers.

Staff Participants

Staff Participants include staff members who are incumbent or newly hired employees of the Eligible Employer at the time of their selection for the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program.

- Staff Participant roles may include but are not limited to: personal care attendants, home health aides, licensed nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, community health workers, peer specialists, recovery coaches, and/or registered nurses seeking to obtain a BSN degree.

Eligible Employers may only provide Grant Program benefits to Staff Participants who:

- Meet the entry requirements for the degree/certificate academic program they intend to pursue, or
- Are willing to engage in coursework or other tutoring/training that will prepare them for academic program entry

All selected Staff Participants must be able to achieve a higher-level nursing degree by December 31, 2026.

Eligible Employers must co-develop a plan with Staff Participants for achieving this requirement and maintain written documentation of the plan.

Staff Participants

Eligible Employers that receive grant awards are responsible for determining the detailed criteria they will use to select Staff Participants for the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program established at their organization.

AHS encourages Eligible Employers to leverage Grant Program funds to advance the professional development of health care employees from marginalized communities.

Required Program Elements

Eligible Employers must include the following elements in nursing apprenticeship and pipeline programs supported by Grant Program funds:

- Academic education formalized through a partnership agreement with a Vermont nursing school.
- Financial support for academic tuition and fees for Staff Participants (Note that for the purposes of the Grant Program, financial support can include external scholarships and grants, as well as Grant Program and employer support for tuition and fees).
- Financial support for living expenses for Staff Participants in the form of paid release time or stipends to support time for education and study.
- Plan and resources for administering the Grant Program, which may include activities related to program design, program management, and program sustainability planning.

Eligible Employers that receive grant awards must also guarantee that the program they establish enrolls at least two Staff Participants at each training site to ensure a minimum level of peer support.

Optional Program Elements

Optional program elements include but are not limited to:

- **Employer-based clinical education***
- **Academic support, including**
 - Tutoring for academic coursework and licensing exams
 - Assistance building writing or math skills and/or for addressing any of the other academic “gaps” that can present challenges for non-traditional students
 - Support for applying to nursing degree/certificate programs
- **Wraparound support**
 - Career guidance and planning
 - Support for navigating the myriad social and economic pressures that can present challenges for non-traditional students
 - A dedicated mentor from among the senior staff of the employer organization

Eligible Employers may elect to include some, all, or none of these elements in their program. They may also choose to include other program elements in their program if they determine those elements will enhance program quality or sustainability.

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* *Additional grant funds are available to support employer-based clinical education.*

Additional Obligations for Partnerships

Eligible Employers may elect to form a partnership with other Eligible Employers to establish and operate a program.

Applications that include partnership(s) between two or more Eligible Employers must:

- Identify a lead organization to be responsible for managing grant funds and ensuring compliance with funding requirements, and
- Include a plan for coordinating funding and program activities across all partners.

Lead organizations that receive grant awards are expected to engage partner organizations through a legally binding agreement.

Obligated Commitment to Sponsoring Employers

Eligible Employers that use Grant Program funds to provide financial support for tuition and fees or living expenses for Staff Participants may require such Staff Participants to commit to working with the organization as a higher-level nursing professional following completion of the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program.

However, the length of any such required commitment may not exceed 18 months following completion of the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program.

Eligible Employers that use Grant Program funds to cover Staff Participants' tuition and fees or living costs and elect to require Staff Participants to commit to working with them upon program completion are solely responsible for developing and monitoring obligated service contracts with Staff Participants.

Eligible Employers may not recoup Grant Program funds from Staff Participants in the event they do not complete their service commitment to the Eligible Employer.

Eligible Expenditures | Tuition and Fees

Staff Participants' tuition and fees must be covered in full by one or more funding sources, including Grant Program funds, Eligible Employer funds, and scholarships and grants.

Grant awards may be used to cover the cost of tuition and fees (as established by Vermont nursing schools) for Staff Participants enrolled in a nursing degree/certificate program at the Vermont nursing school with which the Eligible Employer is partnered.

Grant awards may also be used to cover the cost of tuition and fees for Staff Participants enrolled in a formal program to prepare the Staff Participant for entry into a nursing degree/certificate program (such as the Allied Health Preparation Certificate Program at Community College of Vermont or a similar program) if the Staff Participant will be able to complete a PN certificate program or higher-level nursing degree by December 31, 2026.

Eligible Expenditures | Financial Support for Living Expenses

Staff Participants must be provided with financial assistance in meeting their living costs through one or more funding sources, including Grant Program funds, Eligible Employer funds, and scholarships and grants.

Grant awards may be used to provide financial support for living expenses for Staff Participants, with the goal of enabling Staff Participants to pursue academic coursework and study.

Eligible Employers may provide financial support for living expenses through one of the following mechanisms:

- **Paid release time** (inclusive of salary and benefits). The dollar amount of the paid release time provided should reflect the number of hours per week/weeks per month for which Staff Participants are released from regular staff duties for education.
- **Stipends** that support Staff Participant time for education and study. Stipend amounts should be sufficient to allow Staff Participants to take time away from work for education purposes.

Eligible Expenditures | Employer-Based Clinical Education

Grant awards may be used to cover the costs of providing employer-based clinical education for Staff Participants, including the costs of preparing clinical faculty and supporting clinical faculty teaching hours.

Eligible Employers may expend:

- Up to \$20,000 on employer-based clinical education activities per Grant Program year for programs that serve cohorts of up to ten (10) Staff Participants.
- Up to \$30,000 per Grant Program year for programs that serve cohorts of 11 or more Staff Participants.

Eligible Expenditures | Program Design, Management, and Sustainability Planning

Grant awards may be used by Eligible Employers to cover the cost of the staff time needed to design, manage, and engage in sustainability planning for the program established at their organization.

Note that program management activities may include:

- The delivery of support for Staff Participants not funded elsewhere, including but not limited to academic support, wraparound support, and employer-based mentors.
- Activities related to becoming an apprenticeship program registered with the State of Vermont.

Eligible Employers may expend:

- Up to \$75,000 on per Grant Program year for programs that serve cohorts of up to ten (10) Staff Participants.
- Up to \$85,000 per Grant Program year for programs that serve cohorts of 11 or more Staff Participants.

Eligible Expenditures | General

Eligible Employers with existing nursing apprenticeship or pipeline programs may only use Grant Program funds to increase the number of Staff Participants in the program.

- For example: If the Eligible Employer's Grant Program enrolled five (5) Staff Participants in previous years, and the Eligible Employer requests Grant Program funds to expand the number of Staff Participants to six (6), the Eligible Employer will only be able to use the grant award to cover the cost of tuition and fees and financial support for one (1) Staff Participant.

Eligible Employers with new nursing apprenticeship or pipeline programs may use grant awards to cover the cost of tuition and fees and financial support for all or some Staff Participants, per their discretion.

Application Information

Available Funding Amount

A total of **\$9.0 million** is available for the Health Care Employer Nursing Apprenticeship and Pipeline Grant Program over two funding rounds. **\$4.5 million** is available for each funding round.

Eligible Employers submitting applications for the **first** funding round may request funding for Staff Participants entering either formal nursing degree/certificate programs or formal preparation for entry into such programs in Fall 2023, Spring 2024, or Summer 2024.

Eligible Employers submitting applications for the **second** funding round may request funding for Staff Participants entering such programs in Fall 2024, Spring 2025, or Summer 2025.

Application Period

Eligible Employers must submit fully complete application materials to ahs.nurseworkforcegrants@vermont.gov by July 14, 2023 at 11:59 PM to be considered for a Round 1 grant award.

Round 1 Application Content and Audit Requirements

A complete application includes:

- Grant Application and Coversheet (use required template)
- Application Budget Form (use required template)
 - Detailed instructions for completing the Budget Form are provided in the required template
- A completed W-9 form
 - Form W-9 and detailed instructions are [available from the IRS](#)
 - A physical signature and date are required
 - The form must be signed and dated within the last six months

Grant Application and Coversheet

- Cover Sheet
 - Applicant Information
 - Tips on Unique Entity Identifier (from SAM.Gov)
 - If your organization isn't registered with SAM.gov, please do so as soon as possible.
 - Choose the 'register for financial assistance awards only' option.
 - Be sure to set your registration to 'public.'
 - You will then receive a Unique Entity ID, which you will enter into your grant application.
 - Program Summary
 - Type of program (Apprenticeship or Pipeline)
 - Funding use (expand a program or establish a new program)
 - Academic degree/certificate program to be supported
 - Letters of Commitment from Academic Partner(s)
 - Grant Request Summary – Funding amounts and Matching funds
 - Authorized Signature
- Application Questions
 - Programmatic Questions
 - Pre-award questions (allows AHS to more quickly process awards)

Application Budget Form

- The Budget Form includes 11 fillable templates
 1. Tuition and Fees Program Years 1 – 3 (*mandatory – 3 templates*)
 2. Either Release Time Program Years 1 – 3 OR Study Stipends Program Year 1 – 3 (*mandatory – 3 templates*)
 3. Management Program Year 1 (*mandatory – 1 template*)
 4. Clinical Education Year 1 (*optional*)
- Applicants may attach a separate document with responses to the written narrative sections within each template.
- Budget Summary document is non-fillable and will calculate the total grant request and matching funds for each year.

Round 2 Application Letters of Intent

Eligible Employers that are considering applying in the Round 2 application cycle are asked to submit a non-binding Letter of Intent that identifies the following items to the extent that they are known at this time:

- Anticipated cohort size,
- Academic partner (if known),
- Anticipated partnerships with other Eligible Employers (if any), and
- The degree or certificate programs the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program will support.

The submission of a Letter of Intent is not required in order to submit a Round 2 application. The Round 2 application is expected to be released in January 2024.

Letters of Intent should be submitted via email to ahs.nurseworkforcegrants@vermont.gov by the Round 1 application submission date.

Review and Selection Criteria

All complete and accurate applications submitted during the Application Period will be reviewed by a committee of AHS staff members and subject matter experts.

Note that application budgets and/or matching fund commitments must include financial support for 1) Staff Participants' tuition and fees, 2) Staff Participants' living expenses, and 3) program design, management, and sustainability planning activities for applications to be considered complete.

The review criteria outlined on the next slides will be used to review and rank applications. **The highest possible score for any application is 100 points.**

AHS may also consider geographic distribution of funding to advance geographic equity when making final selection decisions.

Review and Selection Criteria

The quality, completeness, and clarity of the plan for establishing and administering a nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program at the Eligible Employer(s) inclusive of the following components:

- Academic partnership with a Vermont nursing school and academic preparation program(s), as appropriate;
- Plan for establishing and supporting high-quality employer-based clinical education for program participants (*if employer-based clinical education is a part of the program design*);
- Plan for selecting Staff Participants from among the Eligible Employer(s)' existing or to-be-hired employees;
- Plan for supporting the persistence and success of Staff Participants including but not limited to the provision of academic support, wraparound support, peer support, and/or employer-based mentorship;
- Plan for designing and managing the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program;
- Staffing plan, including the experience and qualifications of proposed leaders, staff members, and consultants; and
- Plan for coordinating program funding and activities across employer organizations (*for partnerships between two or more Eligible Employers, only*)

Note that the extent to which the budget request and commitment of matching funds are sufficient to support the proposed plan will also be considered in this review.

55 Points

Review and Selection Criteria

Employer commitment to enabling staff members to move into higher-level nursing positions, including:

- Commitment to participate financially in the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program;
- Ability to leverage nursing scholarship opportunities to maximize the reach of the grant funds;
- Plan for retaining Staff Participants in higher level nursing positions beyond any obligated service commitment requirements; and
- Plan for leveraging the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program to advance the professional development of employees from marginalized communities and the organization's record of success with regards to advancing the professional development of employees from marginalized communities more broadly

25 Points

Review and Selection Criteria

Plan for sustaining the nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program beyond the term of the grant, including but not limited to activities related to becoming an apprenticeship program registered with the State of Vermont.

10 Points

Review and Selection Criteria

Creativity and innovation, including:

- The extent to which the proposed plan extends the opportunity to build a high-quality nursing apprenticeship or pipeline program to smaller employers and/or rural communities.

10 Points

Thank You!

Questions can be directed to
ahs.nurseworkforcegrants@vermont.gov