



RURAL LSC

Rural Works



Rural Works

Background:

Regional economic growth is dependent on human capital. A work-ready and stable workforce is foundational to building resilient rural communities and Rural LISC is committed to investing the human and financial resources to overcome barriers to achieving this reality. Our scope of work centers on the development and expansion of **Rural Works**, a national network of workforce development practitioners collectively pursuing local systems change and employer engagement strategies to sustain and scale their impact within their respective communities.

Rural Works focuses on community-wide workforce development programming and support. The common theme includes building strong employer partnerships, finding best practices in workforce development and sharing them broadly, and tracking the overall impact of these programs on individuals and communities. The goal is to support each community we serve to offer best practice-level workforce development programs at individual, community, and systems levels.

Rural Works is structured around a continuum with three phases:



In the **learning phase**, organizations will build local collaboratives, co-led with key regional employers, and will collectively map their workforce development ecosystems. Once this foundation has been laid, they will move into **developing post-secondary pathways** in partnership with local industry, leveraging opportunities, and addressing gaps identified in their earlier work. Pathway development in many cases will require systems change in order to align the economic development, education, and workforce development systems.

By the final phase, organizations will pursue strategies to sustainably **scale their programs and impact** by engaging local industry to invest in the pathways and programs they helped design. The success and long-term sustainability of this work requires local employers to both believe and invest in the value proposition that a stronger community-wide workforce will both directly and indirectly improve their bottom line, and Rural Works is structured to support organizations in building that buy-in beginning in year one.

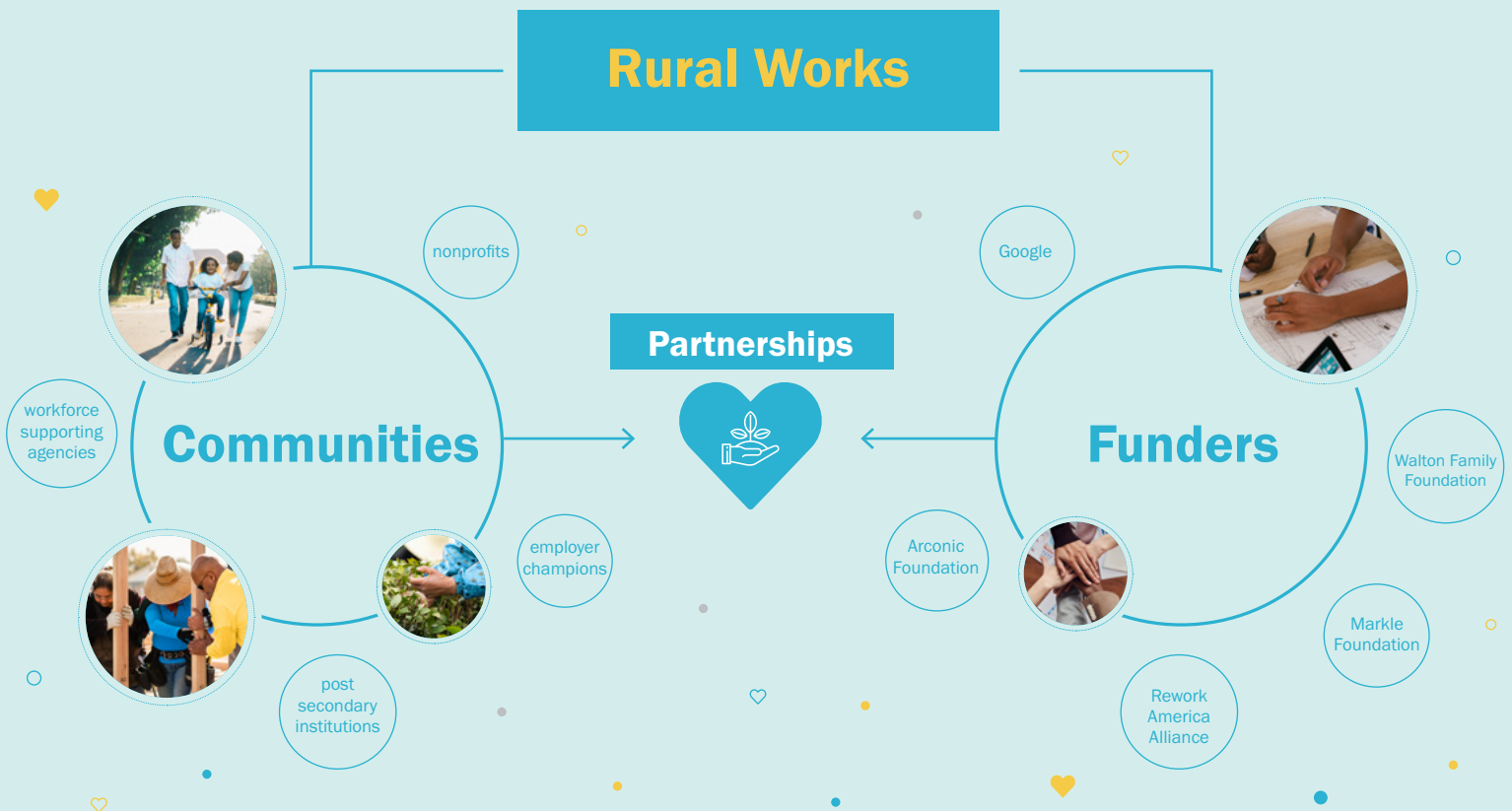


Rural Works also embeds an equity bonus for sites that are collecting demographic information and can show a targeted response to solving local systemic barriers to marginalized groups (people of color, English as a second language, female heads of households, etc.). Projects may include but are not limited to systems change, scholarship support, childcare support, and basic income supports targeted at those populations that data suggests is a heavier and harder lift for workforce development to lift out of generational poverty.

Phase 1

Recap

Rural Works was launched in 2020 and created public-private partnerships in 10 communities around the country. These collaboratives were built around post-secondary institutions, work facing equity based nonprofits, employer champions, and workforce supporting agencies. Each collaborative proposed a coalition of partners to leverage the work and to scale localized systems change within workforce development systems. Today, the national community of practice of rural workforce collaboratives has expanded to **18 sites** through partnerships with Google, Markle Foundation, the Rework America Alliance, Arconic Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation. In addition to expansion, the collaboratives have gained expertise and technical assistance through Rural LISC which has led to greater workforce development sustainability and additional resources from both private funders like Aspen and Microsoft and public funders like Department of Justice and the Economic Development Administration.



Phase 2

Career Pathways

Rural post-secondary institutions are working to rapidly respond to the need for faster pathways that provide on-ramps and off-ramps to livable wage, incumbent worker ladders. Easily navigable career pathways are essential to rural marginalized populations as well as employers seeking a consistent pipeline of skilled labor to fill the employment demands of rural industries. Working exclusively through our workforce funding collaboratives, Rural LISC helped to create career pathways for our two-year post-secondary institutions.

We provided direct 1:1 assistance around four steps:



Sector Base Strategy Building



Employer Led Pathway Development



Work-To-Learn Modeling



Pathway Supportive Services





Sector Base Strategy Building

Working with the Aspen Institute, Rural LISC built a seven sector strategy for Rural America. These sectors include Healthcare; Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics; Hotel, Retail, and Accommodation; Technology; Energy & Renewables; Advanced Manufacturing & Skill Trades; and finally Agribusiness. Utilizing BLS data, Rural LISC made data-based decisions on what strategies are best for rural economies. By basing our work in sectoral strategies, we were better able to make a systems level approach to workforce development that targets cluster occupations, supports workers efforts towards honing their skills, provides stronger labor pools for employers, and aligns systems towards a common set of skills for livable wage employment thus reducing barriers to good jobs for rural job seekers.

Post-Secondary institutions were the greatest beneficiary of this work. By aligning systems, they were better able to receive the employer support they required to fine tune pathway development and to pipeline in skill seekers. Career pathway development also meant more seamless transitions for the rural learner post credential. By embedding employers into the process, post-secondary institutions were able to create more reliable transfers out of education and into employment creating stronger and more supportive systems for both employers and learners. Rural LISC worked with each institution (18 in total) to map out a minimum of three pathways and where supports and exits were needed to better serve the system. Rural LISC then published the pathways for each site so that they could be easily marketed and implemented.



Employer Led Pathway Development

Essential to this work is alignment to the regional labor market. This requires industry to be part of the planning process which is why in *Year One: Collaborative Development*, Rural LISC required at least three employers to sit on every collaborative and inform on a wider coalition of industries to the region. Employers were brought together to co-design the process with their local post-secondary institutions and highlight stronger entry points but also exits that would lead to increased hiring. Most pathways were built around short term credentialing that could be stackable and transferable and would lead to early hiring where a candidate could grow and mature in a role that offered base pay while learning

and economic mobility once employed. In addition, employers and post-secondary institutions were provided training on how to incorporate prior training and skills into educational development leading to greater equity for marginalized rural learners. This process gave employers more insight into the training process and greater quality control of potential employment candidates. It also offered them opportunities towards co-impact by investing in the collaborative models with resources, training, and equipment.



Work-To-Learn Modeling

Rural LISC, in partnership with Thomas P Miller and Associates (TPMA), was named a Department of Labor Apprenticeship Ambassador and provided support around work-to-learn models that could be imbedded into career pathway development. As part of this support, sites are given technical assistance around hourly- and competency-based apprenticeship models, which includes direct assistance in employer involvement (which leads to direct service for Year 3 programming), structured on-the-job learning, related instruction for post-secondary partners, rewards for skills gained, and national occupational credentialing. Rural LISC believes this strategy creates a stable and reliable pipeline of skilled workers; closes the skills gap while creating career ladders; develops a customized training program consistency to training; creates a greater ROI for employers; and improves loyalty and retention.



Pathway Supportive Services

Supportive services are needed for marginalized workers during entry gateways, on-ramps, and off-ramps to career pathways and apprenticeships. Rural LISC has leveraged additional support to meet these needs that exist outside the policies of WIOA Title II so that skill seekers can receive stipends, utility assistance, childcare, transportation assistance, specialized tools and clothing, and credentialing fees. In addition, Rural LISC provided assistance to collaboratives to play a navigator role for their career pathways so that skill seekers had a helping hand in moving through the post-secondary process and seamlessly transition through career coaching to employment.

Equity bonus

Rural LISC provided equity bonuses to sites that serve at the intersection of rural and BIPOC populations. These bonuses were to scale up localized solutions for workforce funding collaboratives who took a deeper dive in serving Black, LatinX, and Indigenous populations. Sites receiving the equity bonus increased their service to BIPOC populations by 33% over Year 1, creating greater equity within workforce development systems for rural BIPOC populations. In total, 7 sites received the equity bonus and served over 13,000 rural BIPOC individuals as well as 17 tribes with workforce employment services.

Scaling Data

Rural LISC has seen firsthand the transformational changes fostered through Rural Works. Yet there was need to create stronger data share agreements to better collect and analyze data in order to track scale at the local level. In particular, efforts were made to provide common vocabulary and strengthen data collection for collaboratives to track outputs, outcomes, and systems change across rural workforce stakeholders (work serving organizations, post-secondary education, and employers). Currently, rural systems remain under-resourced and disjointed in their data collection efforts. Using Rural Works collaboratives as local anchors, Rural LISC was able to show that stakeholders can further engage rural public-private partnerships to design stronger theory of change development, needs assessments, philanthropic program development, landscape scans, and communication strategies. Additionally, the collaboratives were able to grow their evaluation skills to provide culturally responsive assessments; developmental, formative and summative analysis; mixed-methods data collection and program and portfolio evaluation. Rural LISC believes by layering in these technical assistance and capacity-building efforts into the collaboratives, the programs can achieve a stronger and more equitable rural workforce ecosystem. By creating data tool alignment, the local collaboratives can be more responsive in programing and feedback to the field. In addition, this strategy yielded relevant, higher quality data that maximizes the community's insights into existing and new information to drive change and improvement across the collaborative. Lastly, this alignment helped further achieve scale without additional investment in programming. All collaboratives increased their total outputs by simply aggregating across partnerships rather than collecting from one backbone.

Community Leverage Example

Rural LISC has layered in supports for rural returning citizens in the Mississippi Delta, where the criminalization of poverty prevents job seekers from gaining quality employment. Through a Rural LISC innovation grant provided by McKenzie Scott, Rural LISC provided support to the Mississippi Delta Rural Workforce Funding Collaborative for an expungement clinic coupled with direct technical skill training for industrial maintenance. The program served over 98 individuals in receiving career coaching, credentialing through Mississippi Delta Community College, and expungement. **This helped transition individuals from unemployable to a livable wage career and directly impacted a majority minority labor pool.** In addition, Rural LISC provided capacity support to the workforce funding collaborative to receive a Byrne Criminal Justice Institute grant from the Department of Justice for an additional leverage of \$800,000 to support the work. This represents the largest federal investment into a Rural Works collaborative to date. Without the direct technical assistance from Rural Works, the local rural community would not have been able to compete for the federal award, and now has two years of sustainability within their workforce efforts through the program.



Total Outputs Year Two

Total Clients Served

25,598

Education & Training

Rural Post-Secondary Partnerships	37
Entering Vocational Training or Career Education	1,941
Completed Vocational Training or Career Education	1,193

Employment

All Job Placements	2,606
Full Time Job Placements	1,626
Part Time Job Placements	284
Apprenticeship & Work Learn Programs	696

Industry Engagements

Employers Engaged	204
Rural Industry Sectors	7
Workforce Funding Collaborative Leverage	\$11.7 M

Wealth Building

(Integrated Services – Employment Coaching +
Financial Coaching + Income Supports)

Value of Income Supports Received for Integrated Service Clients	\$1.1 M
Average Savings for Integrated Service Clients	\$5,678

Ascendium Education Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to helping people reach the education and career goals that matter to them. Ascendium invests in initiatives designed to increase the number of students from low-income backgrounds who complete postsecondary degrees, certificates and workforce training programs, with an emphasis on first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. Ascendium's work identifies, validates and expands best practices to promote large-scale change at the institutional, system and state levels, with the intention of elevating opportunity for all. For more information, visit <https://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org>

Thank

you



Appendix: **Case examples of career pathways**

Source: People Inc.



CAREER PATHWAYS HVAC



JOB



EDUCATION & TRAINING



SKILLS NEEDED



PAY

Trainee

Assists with installation of HVAC equipment.

High-school diploma and basic construction skills offered through on-the-job training

\$40,000.00

Apprentice

Learns the skills required of the HVAC/R installation and service trade while working in a full-time paid employment position with on-the-job training from experienced HVAC journey-level technicians as well as company-provided structured apprenticeship training classes.

High School Diploma and 3-5 years apprenticeship requiring full-time employment, on-the-job training, and technical training in the evening or on weekends throughout the apprenticeship period. Industry credentials: EPA, HVAC Excellence, NATE, OSHA 10

Basic skills needed by all HVAC professionals:

Mechanical aptitude and ability with tools; Basic math; Ability to work safely at heights, on ladders, and in confined spaces; Good verbal and written communication skills; Ability to safely lift 50 pounds, Valid driver's license and insurable driving record; Team-oriented, positive attitude; Ability to follow directions.

\$40,000.00

Tradesperson

Works under the supervision of journey-level technician or lead installer to assist in the installation and maintenance of HVAC/R equipment.

High School Diploma and industry credentials: EPA, HVAC Excellence, NATE, OSHA 10 or OSHA 30

Basic Skills above, plus computer proficiency

\$45,000.00

Residential Installer

Installs HVAC equipment following manufacturer specifications, industry codes and standards, and company requirements.

High School Diploma, Postsecondary HVAC/R Training and industry credentials: EPA, HVAC Excellence, NATE, NCI, OSHA 10 or OSHA 30

Basic Skills above, plus: Knowledge and understanding of HVAC low and high voltage systems, Basic math, Ability to safely use residential HVAC/R gauges and electrical test equipment, Familiar with the principles of evacuation; Ability to balance air flow, Knowledge of sheet metal practices, Proficient in reading field drawings.

\$50,000



RURAL LSC



JOB



EDUCATION & TRAINING



SKILLS NEEDED



PAY

Commercial Installer

Work under the supervision of a Lead Installer or Supervisor to install HVAC equipment and/or refrigeration equipment and accessories in commercial buildings.

Postsecondary technical training and industry credentials: EPA, HVAC Excellence, NATE, NCI, OSHA 10 or OSHA 30, OSHA scissor lift

Basic skills above, plus: Ability to read and understand blueprints and schematics, Ability to interpret diagrams, drawings and equipment manuals, Ability to safely use scissor/power lifts, Excellent customer service skills, Ability to work independently.

\$60,000.00

Facilities Maintenance Technician

Responsible for a variety of issues and related improvements of a building's HVAC/R and plumbing systems, with an emphasis on performing preventative, predictive and unscheduled maintenance as needed.

Post Secondary Technical Training; Experience using a computerized maintenance management system; Familiar with building automation and energy management systems. Industry credentials: EPA, HVAC Excellence, NATE, OSHA 10 or OSHA 30, OSHA scissor lift

Basic skills above plus: Strong knowledge of the tools and techniques used to maintain, diagnose problems, and repair HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems, building structures and machinery, Ability to read and understand blueprints and schematics, Ability to interpret diagrams, drawings and equipment manuals, Strong critical thinking and problem solving skills, Ability to work independently, Ability to work on-call hours as necessary

\$50,000.00

Service Technician

Diagnose and repair a wide variety of heating and air conditioning systems according to company standards, and providing the customer with a high-quality experience while working under minimum or no supervision.

Postsecondary Technical Training. Industry credentials: EPA, HVAC Excellence, NATE, NCI, OSHA 10 or OSHA 30

Basic skills above plus: Strong knowledge and understanding of HVAC equipment and troubleshooting techniques, Strong critical thinking and problem solving skills, Knowledge of basic sheet metal practices, Knowledge of air balancing principles and techniques, Proficient in the safe use of residential HVAC/R gauges and electrical test equipment, Proficient in the evacuation, recovery, and charging of refrigerants, Ability to perform combustion analysis on gas fired equipment, Ability to read and interpret wiring diagrams and blueprints, Excellent customer service skills, Demonstrate ability and willingness to take on responsibility and leadership roles. Strong verbal and written communication skills, Proficient with computers and phones, Ability to work on-call hours as necessary.

\$70,000.00





CAREER PATHWAYS Plumbing

 JOB

 EDUCATION & TRAINING

 RESPONSIBILITIES & SKILLS

 PAY

Apprentice/ Journeyman

High School Diploma + 4 years apprenticeship requiring full-time employment, on-the-job training, and technical training in the evening or on weekends throughout the apprenticeship period. Industry credentials: EPA, HVAC Excellence, NATE, OSHA 10

\$44,974.00

Responsible for assisting in complex jobs and handling smaller jobs. Assisting with: plumbing repairs and installation; cost estimates; code compliance; job site clean up; answering client queries.

Licensed Plumber

- 4 years practical experience + 240 hours of formal vocational training; or
- 5 years of practical experience + 160 hours of formal vocational training; or
- 6 years of practical experience + 80 hours of formal vocational training or
- 7+ years of practical experience + 40 hours of formal vocational training; or
- Associates degree or certificate of completion from at least a two-year plumbing program + 2 years of practical experience; or
- Associates degree or certificate of completion from at least a two-year plumbing program + 2 years of practical experience; or
- Plumbing-focused bachelor's degree or certificate of completion + 1 year of practical experience; or
- 10 years practical experience. Journey Plumber license is required by the Virginia Department of Professional Occupational Regulation.

Skills needed: Foundation in math (algebra and geometry), science (physics) computers (computer-aided drafting), blueprint reading, organizational skills, detail-oriented, good customer service skills, be able and willing to follow instructions, and be prepared to travel to clients' homes to complete work.

\$48,369.00

Plumbing



JOB

Master Plumber

Repair & install plumbing systems without supervision, including gas/water/drainage pipes and plumbing fixtures for commercial and residential properties.



EDUCATION & TRAINING

After one year of successful service, the Journeyman licensed plumber can take the examination to become a Master Plumber issued by the Virginia Department of Professional Occupational Regulation.



RESPONSIBILITIES & SKILLS

Monitoring other plumbers. Installing, maintaining and repairing plumbing components including: steam and hot water exchangers for heating systems and swimming pools; radiator valves, steam valves and condensate pipes; sewage pumps, water heater pumps and chilled water pumps. Replacing damaged flooring and ceiling tiles. Interpreting blueprints to plan how to conduct repairs and modifications.



PAY

\$54,000.00

Pipefitters, Steamfitters, Pipelayers, Sprinkler Fitters

[Plumbers license]; Apprenticeship

Pipefitters are plumbers responsible for maintaining and installing pressurized pipes used for water tanks, boilers and furnaces. They also monitor these pressurized systems.

Steamfitters are plumbers responsible for installing pipes for the transportation of liquids and high-pressure gases.

Pipelayers are plumbers responsible for digging trenches and laying pipes in these trenches. These pipes are composed of different materials like cement, metal and concrete.

Sprinkler fitters are plumbers who install, modify and inspect fire sprinkler systems in buildings.

\$48,369.00



RURAL LISC

Electrician

 JOB TITLE

Electrician Helper

 EDUCATION & TRAINING

High School Diploma plus Work-based Learning: Some previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience is usually needed.



RESPONSIBILITIES & SKILLS

Duties include using, supplying, or holding materials or tools, and cleaning work area and equipment. Skills Needed: Active Listening, Quality Control Analysis, Critical Thinking, Repairing, Speaking, Troubleshooting

 PAY

\$44,974.00

Journeyman Electrician

- One of the following is required:
- 4 years experience + 240 hours formal training
 - 5 years of experience + 160 hours formal training
 - 6 years experience + 80 hours formal training
 - 7+ years experience + 40 hours formal training
 - Associate's degree or certificate from at least a two-year program in an electrician-related field from a community college or technical school + 2 years practical experience
 - Bachelor's degree or certificate from a college or university in an engineering curriculum related to the electrical trade + 1 year practical experience
 - 10 years practical experience

Assess electrical systems, read and interpret electrical blueprints, use a variety of tools and techniques to repair and maintain electrical systems, use knowledge to determine the best way to install new electrical systems, answer any questions customers may have about their electrical systems and components, follow all safety requirements and OSHA guidelines while at work

\$48,369.00

Master Electrician

Once a journeyman has a license for one year, s/ he is eligible to apply for a maser electrician license. Master Electricians can work on their own without requiring supervision from any other parties. With this license type, Master Electricians can open their own electrical business or work as an independent contractor.

Repairs, installs, replaces, and tests electrical circuits, equipment, and appliances; Leads, guides, and/or trains other electricians; Repairs and maintains motor control centers and programmable logic controls (1000 volt and below); Plans electrical secondary system additions or modifications; May perform work of lower level electricians; Ensures proper care in the use and maintenance of equipment and supplies; promotes continuous improvement of workplace safety and environmental practices; Reads, employs, and updates electrical panel schedules.

\$54,000.00

