

Health Care Employment Reinvestment Opportunity (H.E.R.O.) Fund

Awarded Programs

The H.E.R.O. Fund sought grant applications from healthcare training and education programs, as well as healthcare industry partners, to meet the growing employment demands for nursing, allied health professionals, and other high-demand healthcare providers.

Expanding the Healthcare Pipeline to Meet the Nursing Workforce Needs of Louisiana

College/Educational Partner

LSU Alexandria

Regional Partners

Christus St. Francis Cabrini, Rapides Regional Medical Center, Avoyelles Hospital, Mercy Regional Medical Center, Christus St. Francis Cabrini Surgical Center

The goal of the “Expanding the Healthcare Pipeline to Meet the Nursing Workforce Needs of Louisiana” project is to increase the number of LSUA nursing graduates by 25%.

This will be accomplished by implementing strategies to expand enrollment and completion of the Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) program at LSUA over the grant period, with plans to sustain successful implementations. The expansion strategies involve the introduction of an evening option for the ASN program, student-centered scholarships, and National Clinical Licensure Examination (NCLEX) prep resources to maintain the pass rate at or above 95% on the NCLEX licensure exam.

BRHireD Program

College/Educational Partner

Baton Rouge Community College

Regional Partners

Baton Rouge Health District, Baton Rouge General, Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, Our Lady of the Lake Baton Rouge, Ochsner Health Baton Rouge, Woman's Hospital

Led by the Baton Rouge Health District (BRHD), the BRHireD Program takes a regional and collaborative approach to strategically meet nursing support workforce demands in LDH Region 2 (Capital Area).

Over the 27-month H.E.R.O. program period, the BRHireD Program proposes to leverage its role as a strong health workforce intermediary organization and build on its active health workforce coalition to recruit and enroll 100 nursing support students. The goal is the successful employment of at least 80 qualified medical assistant graduates with five of the most prominent healthcare employers in Baton Rouge, including Baton Rouge General, Ochsner Baton Rouge, Woman's Hospital, Our Lady of the Lake Baton Rouge, and Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center.

Develop an LSU Health New Orleans School of Nursing BSN Program Off-Campus Instructional Site (OCIS) at LSU A&M in Baton Rouge

College/Educational Partner

LSU Health School of Nursing

Regional Partner

Our Lady of the Lake

This proposal seeks H.E.R.O. funding to establish a Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC) School of Nursing (LSUHSC SON) Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN) off-campus instructional site (OCIS) at LSU A&M in Baton Rouge. This initiative directly aligns with the H.E.R.O. Fund's mission by expanding nursing education capacity, increasing student enrollment, and enhancing workforce readiness in Louisiana's healthcare sector.

Approximately 400 pre-nursing students are enrolled at LSU A&M, with 60 (17%) applying to the LSUHSC SON program in New Orleans in Fall 2024. A pre-pandemic survey of LSU A&M students revealed strong interest in pursuing a BSN program in Baton Rouge, with many students expressing a desire to remain on the Baton Rouge campus for their entire nursing education. The survey also indicated that if a local BSN program were unavailable, many students would consider applying to other SEC schools, particularly the University of Alabama's nursing program.

Certified Nursing Assistant Sponsorship

College/Educational Partners

Louisiana Delta Community College, Baton Rouge Community College,
South Louisiana Community College

Regional Partners

St. Francis Medical Center, Our Lady of the Lake Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes

The CNA Sponsorship program will provide comprehensive support for individuals seeking to become certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and will cover full tuition for the state-approved CNA training program, the cost of the required materials and supplies as dictated by the educational institution, and certification examination fees.

Program participants will complete up to 80 hours of classroom instruction and up to 45 hours of clinical training at a long-term care facility. Upon successful completion, graduates will be prepared to take the Louisiana CNA certification examination. The program will be offered across the Franciscan Missionaries or Our Lady Health System (FMOLHS) ministry and program participants must commit to working within FMOLHS as a certified nursing assistant for a minimum of one year post-certification.

SoLAcc and the Acadiana Healthcare Training Consortium

College/Educational Partner

South Louisiana Community College

Regional Partner

Maison de Lafayette

The program design presented in this proposal will serve to meet the regional demand for healthcare workers, increase programmatic capacity and enrollment in programs for three critical healthcare credentials, increase program completion and exam pass rates, provide incentives that financially support students, and support dual enrollment and career pathways in the healthcare field.

The CNA and Practical Nursing (PN) programs are currently recognized as high-demand occupations in Regional Labor Market Area 4, with the Louisiana Workforce Commission classifying nursing assistants as a 3-star job and licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses as a 4-star job. These proposed activities will focus on increasing the overall capacity of the college's CNA and PN classes to better meet the projected demand for these occupations.

Strategic Physician Recruitment for Pediatric Subspecialty Care

College/Educational Partner

LSU Health Shreveport School of Medicine

Regional Partner

Willis Knighton Health

This program aims to increase the number of pediatric subspecialists in northwest Louisiana to meet the growing patient needs of the community and to support the educational training needs of the LSU Health Shreveport students and residents.

H.E.R.O. funds will be utilized to recruit and incentivize current and former trainees to join the LSUHS faculty and serve the healthcare needs of children in northwest Louisiana upon completion of pediatric subspecialty training. Subspecialty fields inadequately or not currently available in northwest Louisiana will be prioritized including Nephrology, Genetics, Gastroenterology, Neurology, Adolescent Medicine, Developmental Pediatrics, Endocrinology, and Rheumatology.

Expanding the Workforce for Critical Mental Health Services in Louisiana

College/Educational Partner

Louisiana State University

Regional Partner

Our Lady of the Lake

In this proposal we have identified three specific aims to address this shortage of mental health services and providers in the underserved Baton Rouge community:

- 1. Expand critical mental health services**
- 2. Provide training to mental health trainees in these critical services**
- 3. Increase the likelihood that mental health trainees will stay in Louisiana following their training, through training experiences that encourage community connections**

Each of these aims can be reached by expanding the already existing collaboration between Our Lady of the Lake hospital and Louisiana State University's clinical psychology training program by adding four extern funding lines.

FranU Wolves at Work Internship Program: A Healthcare Career Pipeline

College/Educational Partner

Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University (FranU)

Regional Partners

Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System (FMOLHS), Baton Rouge Youth Coalition (BRYC)

The Wolves at Work (WaW) Internship Program is a collaboration between Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University (FranU) and Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System (FMOLHS). It offers FranU students a high-paying, flexible, part-time internship to explore entry-level healthcare careers while allowing FranU students to work and pursue an undergraduate degree. This past fall semester, FMOLHS placed three FranU WaW students into internships.

FranU also has a long-standing partnership with the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition (BRYC), an afterschool academic enrichment program for high school students from communities defined by low quality-of-life metrics, including healthcare access/outcomes and low participation rates in post-secondary education. The partners share a vision and a commitment to empowering individuals through education and support, aiming to prepare them for successful careers and meaningful contributions to society.

Increasing Pharmacy Technicians Through the Practical Experience Pathway

College/Educational Partner

Louisiana Independent Pharmacies Association (LIPA)

Regional Partner

People Care LLC

The goal of the program is to recruit and train, as well as assist with certification and licensing, 75 additional Louisiana-licensed pharmacy technicians. This is anticipated to increase the pool of pharmacy technicians available to practice in Louisiana pharmacies, many of them located in smaller towns in medically underserved communities and neighborhoods throughout the state.

There is a need for one or more certified pharmacy technicians in every pharmacy in Louisiana. In its 2024 report to the Louisiana Legislature justifying the recent change in pharmacy technician regulations for training, the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy cited a desire for more pharmacy technician candidates to address the current workforce shortage. The ultimate outcome envisioned was a positive impact on consumers as a result of more pharmacy technicians in the workplace and better pharmacy staffing, leading to better and more efficient patient care.

LSU Health Shreveport Doctor of Physical Therapy Hybrid Program-Lafayette

College/Educational Partner

LSU Health Shreveport

Regional Partner

Ochsner Lafayette General

The physical therapy education program at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport (LSUHSC-S) seeks to establish an expansion program to offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree in Lafayette beginning in May 2026.

The program will be offered in an innovative hybrid delivery format, the first in the state for obtaining the DPT, but not new to the profession. Didactic course material will be offered through a web-based platform, but students will be on-site twice a semester for one-week blocks for intensive labs, summative assessments, and integrative clinical assignments. We are partnering with Ochsner Lafayette General (OLG), one of our major clinical partners in the region, to provide this opportunity in Lafayette, an underserved area of the state. OLG has committed to providing space, on-site teaching, and clinical internships. As the largest local provider, Ochsner will benefit from DPT graduates being produced in the region; therefore, the collaboration is beneficial to both parties. There is currently no physical therapy education program in this area.

Nursing Student Support Program

College/Educational Partner

Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College

Regional Partner

Minden Medical Center

The Nursing Student Support Program (NSSP) aims to provide financial assistance, resources, and educational opportunities for prospective nursing students at Minden Medical Center (MMC).

The program will serve to address nursing workforce shortages, promote diversity within the nursing field, and provide a sustainable pathway for successful completion of nursing education and practice. This initiative will support up to four students annually through 2027.

Scholarships for Practical Nursing Students

College/Educational Partner

SOWELA Technical Community College

Regional Partner

Byrd Regional Hospital

The Practical Nursing (PN) program is designed to prepare the student to become a licensed practical nurse. The program consists of both classroom instruction and supervised clinical activities in accredited hospitals, nursing homes, and other health care agencies. The program content has been developed utilizing the administrative rules for the Louisiana State Board of Practical Nurse Examiners (LSBPNE).

The program incorporates the concepts of holistic nursing, hierarchy of needs, stress and adaptation, creative problem-solving, and psychosocial development. Upon graduation, the student is awarded a Technical Diploma or an Associate of Applied Science Degree and is eligible to take the National Clinical Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for practical nurses. All coursework must be completed with at least 80% or above for program progression and completion.

Nursing Faculty Recruitment and Retention Project

College/Educational Partner

Louisiana State University at Eunice

Regional Partner

Ochsner Lafayette General

The H.E.R.O. (Healthcare Education Relief Opportunities) funding, authorized by HB329, presents a crucial opportunity for LSU Eunice Nursing to address the pressing shortage of qualified faculty. The current shortage in nursing faculty significantly hinders our ability to fill our full current nursing student capacity, resulting in fewer registered nurses.

H.E.R.O. funds will be instrumental in maintaining the high standards of our nursing program and ensuring an increase in student admissions. Since 2016, LSU Eunice has increased its nursing program enrollment by 65% (60) annually; however, with the addition of five full-time nursing faculty, the enrollment increase would be 100% (100).

Nursing Freshman Advanced Summer Term (NursesFAST)

College/Educational Partner

Louisiana Tech University

Regional Partners

Christus Highland Medical Center, St. Francis Med Center, Ochsner LSU Health Shreveport, Glenwood Regional Medical Center, LA Emergency Response Network

Louisiana Tech University's Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) with integrated RN to BSN program prepares new registered nurses to enter the workforce within three years and complete their BSN in the fourth year.

This is a demanding program that requires incoming freshman students to complete Anatomy and Physiology (A&P) 1 and 2 and Microbiology, with the required labs in their first year to compete for a seat in the clinical program. A&P has the highest withdrawal rate of all the biological science courses, and this is a critical foundation course for nursing. This funding will admit a cohort of 24 students who come to Louisiana Tech's campus for the second summer session before their freshman year to enroll in a separate section of A&P 1 and the lab.

ANCHOR - Advancing Nursing and Children's Health Opportunities for our Region

College/Educational Partner

Nicholls State University

Regional Partner

Thibodaux Regional Health System

Within Thibodaux Regional Health System (TRHS) and the surrounding region, there are limited in-patient pediatric services offered which have reciprocally led to a small number of pediatric nurses seeking employment in the area. New Thibodaux Regional Health System School of Nursing at Nicholls State University (SON) Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) graduates who have an interest in pediatric nursing choose to work at out-of-area specialty hospitals traveling over 60+ miles.

As a major healthcare provider in the area, TRHS seeks to grow this area of service and become recognized as a leader in pediatric care services, whereby families will seek quality care locally. To address this gap, pediatric practice-ready nurses are needed.

YouthForce NOLA Healthcare Internships

College/Educational Partner

YouthForce NOLA

Regional Partner

Ochsner Health

YouthForce NOLA requests \$273,600 in Healthcare Employment Reinvestment Opportunity (H.E.R.O.) funds to serve 75 rising high school students from Orleans Parish in internships with healthcare organizations through the YouthForce NOLA Internship (YFI).

YFI connects rising high school seniors from open-enrollment New Orleans public high schools with regional employers in one of four high-wage, high-demand industry clusters: health sciences, skills crafts, digital media/IT, and business services. H.E.R.O. funds will allow YouthForce NOLA to scale up the number of internships with Ochsner Health, matching the \$273,600 award, to prepare youth for a job in this high-wage, high-growth cluster.

Healthcare-Academia Alliance for Nursing Educators (HAANE)

College/Educational Partner

University of Louisiana at Lafayette LHC Group Myers School of Nursing

Regional Partner

Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center

The Healthcare-Academic Alliance for Nurse Educators (HAANE) will provide funding to BSN-prepared registered nurses who wish to pursue a Master of Science degree in Nursing with a concentration in Nursing Education at UL Lafayette.

The program will cover tuition for the 40-credit hour program and provide stipends of \$10,000/semester for four semesters for four students. Participants will be required to enroll in full-time coursework as outlined in the program curriculum and complete the program in two years. To enroll in the HAANE program, participants must agree to teach in the UL Lafayette BSN program for a period of one year for each \$10,000 received. If a faculty position is not available at UL Lafayette, the participant must agree to teach in a Registered Nursing program within 50 miles of Lafayette. All clinical hours for graduate nursing education courses will be completed at an OLOL facility (OLOL, Heart Hospital, Women's and Children's Hospital, Lourdes MD offices, Lourdes Urgent Care, etc). Upon completion of the MSN program and assumption of a faculty position, preference will be given to assigning the HAANE funding recipient to teach undergraduate clinical at one of the OLOL acute care facilities.

SoLAcc, Acadian Medical Center, and Mercy Regional Medical Center Practical Nursing Collaboration

College/Educational Partner

South Louisiana Community College

Regional Partners

Acadian Medical Center, Mercy Regional Medical Center

South Louisiana Community College (SoLAcc) is proposing a strategic collaboration with Acadian Medical Center and Mercy Regional Medical Center to address the growing demand for licensed practical nurses (LPNs) in Evangeline Parish and St. Landry Parish. This collaboration aims to provide high-quality education, hands-on clinical experience, and employment opportunities for nursing students while supporting local healthcare facilities with skilled professionals.

According to the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), licensed practical nurse is currently recognized as a high-demand occupation in Regional Labor Market Area 4, with the LWC classifying licensed practical nurses as a 4-star job. Ultimately, the primary goal of this partnership is to increase the local healthcare workforce by preparing competent and well-trained practical nursing students to meet the increasing demand in the region.

Northshore Technical Community College Surgical Technology

College/Educational Partner

Northshore Technical Community College

Regional Partners

Ochsner Health System, St. Tammany Parish Hospital, Slidell Memorial Hospital

The Northshore Region — with St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington as its core three parishes — has long been recognized as a crucial healthcare corridor for Southeast Louisiana.

According to the 2024 State of the Healthcare Sector Report, over 26,000 healthcare workers currently serve the core three-parish region, generating \$2.1 billion in wages and contributing \$2.4 billion (or more than 11%) to the local GDP. NTCC's proposed two-year Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Surgical Technology degree will emphasize both classroom instruction and hands-on clinical training.

Pilot LPN-to-RN Evening and Weekend Track

College/Educational Partner

Delgado Community College

Regional Partner

Ochsner Health New Orleans

The proposed program is a pilot LPN-to-RN evening and weekend track, designed to provide licensed practical nurses (LPNs) with an opportunity to advance to registered nurse (RN) status.

This initiative aims to address workforce shortages in healthcare while offering LPNs a flexible pathway to career advancement. The program aims to graduate 24 RNs by December 2027, addressing critical healthcare workforce shortages and supporting the career advancement of LPNs. The program also aims for a graduation rate of 80-85% of enrolled students, with appropriate student support, including academic advising, mentorship, and financial assistance.

Pre-Healthcare Medical Science Career Pathway

College/Educational Partner

Warren Easton Charter High School

Regional Partners

New Orleans Career Center, Tulane University Medical Center, Touro Hospital

Provide high school students with an accessible, comprehensive introduction to healthcare careers, igniting curiosity and equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to pursue successful medical careers. The program will support 20 students beginning as sophomores (10th grade) in introductory courses of “Introduction to Health Occupations” and “Medical Terminology.”

Students will select from three specialized tracks of emergency medical responder (EMR), patient care technician (PCT), or certified clinical medical assistant (CCMA). The program will also include mentorship opportunities, job shadowing, and clinical internships. Students who complete the Intro to Health Occupations and Medical Terminology courses and pass the PCT training can pursue advanced certifications through our partnership with the New Orleans Career Center (NOCC). This collaboration ensures students gain the skills, experience, and industry connections needed for long-term success in healthcare.