

## CT Health Horizons Funding Opportunity Overview

### Background

In 2022, the Connecticut State Legislature passed [Special Act 22-9](#) *An Act Expanding Training Programs for Careers in Health Care*. This legislation calls for The Office of Workforce Strategy and partnering agencies to develop an initiative to address the state's health care workforce shortage, with a focus on expanding and enhancing educational programs in higher institutions. To accomplish this goal, The Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) and Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) are launching the CT Health Horizons program, which will diversify and grow the next generation of healthcare workers.

### Purpose

CT Health Horizons is a three-year initiative that will work collaboratively across Connecticut's nonprofit institutes of higher education to grow and diversify the nursing and social work student body and workforce. The program is designed to work collaboratively with higher education and healthcare providers to create partnerships that ease career pathways for students to develop and retain talent in-state.

The goals of CT Health Horizons are:

1. Provide tuition assistance to 1,200 students to increase the diversity of nursing and social work educational programs and the workforce.
2. Expand seat capacity by 1,000 students in nursing and social work programs by supporting faculty levels across Connecticut's educational institutions and clinical sites.
3. Build innovative nursing and social work programs and partnerships with healthcare providers.
4. Recruit, educate, and employ nurses and social workers within Connecticut.

Funding for CT Health Horizons is supported by The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

### Funding Opportunity

CSCU is serving as the lead project and fiscal manager for this funding opportunity for nonprofit colleges and universities with nursing and social work programs located in Connecticut. CT Health Horizons will support three strategic areas:

1. **Tuition assistance** to incentivize low-income and minority students to enter accelerated and cost-effective nursing and social work programs.
2. **Faculty support** to rapidly expand seat capacity and train the next generation of nurses and social workers.
3. **Innovative programs** to promote partnerships between healthcare employers and institutes of higher education to accelerate entrance into careers in nursing and social work.

### Funding Guidelines

CSCU, University of Connecticut (UConn), and Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) will submit one funding response each on behalf of their member institutions. The funding response will include vetted applications and budgets from their individual institutions. A narrative and budget template is attached for member institutions to complete.

Institution projects must have a term of 12-36 months based on the objectives and scale. The maximum anticipated grant amount is \$3,000,000 per institution.

Each educational branch will serve as Project Manager for their institutions during the development of funding responses and during the project period.

#### Tuition Assistance

Individual institutions can request a maximum of \$10,000 in tuition assistance (including tuition and fees) per eligible student through CT Health Horizons. Tuition assistance will be made available for up to two years per student. Institutions are encouraged to leverage additional federal, state, and private funding sources.

Students receiving tuition support should graduate from their respective programs during the project period and be prepared to enter the workforce. Allowable uses of tuition are for students enrolled in associate degree nursing (ADN), accelerated bachelor's in nursing (BSN), Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) and post-graduate certificate in PMHNP, and master of social work (MSW) programs. Tuition support can be made available to students in Bachelor of Nursing (BSN) and Social Work (BSW) programs for the final two years of their education.

Tuition eligibility is broken out in two areas.

#### **ADN, Traditional BSN, BSW**

Eligibility for students receiving tuition assistance will meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a home address from an [Alliance School District](#) as designated by the Connecticut State Department of Education
- Meet the income criteria for [Federal Pell Grant](#) eligibility

Each individual institution will use their own process to identify students and disburse tuition assistance. The maximum of \$10,000 in tuition assistance should be used as a last dollar scholarship and after other sources of state, federal, and private support is exhausted.

#### **Accelerated BSN, MSW, PMHNP**

Eligibility for students receiving tuition assistance will be need-based and determined by each institution. Suggested criteria includes one of the following:

- Have a home address from an [Alliance School District](#) as designated by the Connecticut State Department of Education
- Meet the income criteria for [Federal Pell Grant](#) eligibility
- Have a current salary below Connecticut's living wage as identified by the [MIT Living Wage Calculator](#)
- Demonstrates financial hardship

Each individual institution will use their own process to identify students and disburse tuition assistance.

**Requests for tuition assistance cannot exceed 50% of the total project budget, or \$1,000,000 if solely requesting tuition assistance.** To request tuition assistance, the institution must include a letter of support from Connecticut healthcare employers demonstrating a commitment to interview participating students for job placement prior to degree and certification completion.

CT Health Horizons is allocating \$12,000,000 over the three-year project to reach an estimated 1,200 students at \$10,000 each.

### Faculty Support

Faculty support for individual institutions cannot supplement existing faculty. Request for new faculty can have a maximum amount of \$135,000 (salary and fringe benefits) per faculty. Resources will be available for training costs to onboard and/or assist in certifications and credentialing for new faculty. Faculty can serve in classroom, virtual instruction, medical simulation, and in clinical placement settings. Institutions are encouraged to use flexible hiring practices such as joint appointments and utilizing faculty waivers.

Institutions can leverage in-kind funds to recruit and compensate faculty at amounts above \$135,000. Institutions requesting faculty support should have a sustainability plan to compensate faculty after the funding period. Recruitment and signing bonuses are not eligible uses of project funds.

Faculty should be placed in nursing and social work programs that will expand capacity to graduate students during the project period.

CT Health Horizons is allocating \$12,834,000 over the three-year project to support an estimated 42 faculty to create 1,000 new seats (assuming 24 students per faculty).

### Innovative Programs

Institutions are encouraged to develop employer-driven programs that can include, but are not limited to:

- Develop hiring and talent development pipelines between higher education and healthcare employers (health systems, community health centers, state agencies, post-acute, etc.)
- Create education and career pathway programs for entry- and mid-level workers to become nurses and social workers
- Develop articulation agreements to create a formalized series of stackable credentials and degrees for RN and/or MSW degree completion
- Curriculum development for accelerated, 4+1, and nontraditional programs
- Address barriers in licensing and/or degree completion

There is no maximum award for innovative programs, however the request will count toward the total project budget. To be considered for program support, requests must include a 50% match from an employer partner, philanthropy, or in-kind resource. Staff time is an acceptable form of matching funds. A letter of support from an employer partner is required for proposed programs.

CT Health Horizons is allocating \$6,000,000 over the three-year project to support innovative programs.

### **Submission Process and Requirements**

#### **1) Submission of Project Design**

Each education branch (CSCU, UConn, CCIC) will submit three attachments for each institution responding to the funding opportunity:

- PDF containing the narratives of member institutions that are requesting funds
- Excel document that includes the budget of member institutions that are requesting funds
- Letters of support from employers where applicable (tuition assistance and innovative programs)

Please use the attached narrative response form and budget template for your submission. Submissions should be made to Alice Pritchard, Chief of Staff/Chief Strategy Officer, CSCU at [pritcharda@ct.edu](mailto:pritcharda@ct.edu).

**Approximate Timeline**

Funding opportunity released	September 6, 2022
Response submission deadline	October 21, 2022
Review and revision period	October 24 – December 2, 2022
Project allocation and contracting	December 5 – January 15, 2022
Anticipated commencement of selected projects	January 31, 2023

**Review and Selection Criteria**

Applications will initially be screened to ensure the following:

- Nonprofit colleges and universities located and have their primary physical campus in Connecticut
- All of the proposed funding needs are considered an allowable use under the American Rescue Plan Act
- The application narrative and budget are fully complete

All funding decisions are subject to approval by a proposal review committee consisting of OWS, CSCU, partner agencies, and non-governmental partners. It is the intention of the proposal review committee to fund all institutions and distribute allocated funds in an effective manner. The task force reserves the right to negotiate project scope and budget to align with the total allocated award and guidelines of The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

**Contacts**

For project-related or technical questions about this funding opportunity please email Ben Stang, Director of Healthcare Workforce Strategy, Social Venture Partners ([ben@svp-ct.org](mailto:ben@svp-ct.org)).