

Substance abuse, unemployment, and lower socioeconomic factors form a depressing and vicious cycle. Individuals who misuse substances are more likely to lose jobs or leave the workforce, leading to a reduction in income and a lower quality of life and often to the additional misuse of substances. Recognizing that the prime age employment gap (PAEG) of five rural counties in northeastern Kentucky has been negatively affected by the state’s ongoing opioid crisis, St. Claire Medical Center, Inc., dba St. Claire HealthCare (SCH), proposes the following project components to produce an additional number of workforce-ready individuals equipped with the necessary skills to find meaningful employment in the five-county service area:

- Learning Life Center-Morehead (construction)
- Learning Life Center – programming
- Academic Practice Scholarship
- Governance
- Clinical Workforce Training

Regional Conditions and Needs of Underserved Communities

The proposed service area – Bath, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, and Rowan counties – has a high PAEG and comprises two Local Labor Markets. Local Labor Market Commuting Zone #239 has a PAEG of 19.79; the Micropolitan Statistical Area’s PAEG is 11.05. In addition, the service area’s unemployment rate is approximately one-fourth higher than the national rate.¹ The region’s primary disparity populations are socioeconomically disadvantaged and underserved rural; the service area is 93.6 percent White; 2.3 percent Hispanic; and 2.2 percent Black.²

The Gateway Area Development District, which serves the five counties, reports that the area’s per capita income is \$19,547, half that of the national average.³ The Appalachian Regional Commission has designated four of the five counties as distressed and one county as at-risk, which means they are among the most economically depressed counties in the nation.⁴ Due to these economic factors, the service area includes eight opportunity zones, and four of the five counties have been included in the EDA’s 2023 fiscal year list of persistent poverty counties.⁵

Each of the service area counties has a poverty rate above the national average of 12.6 percent. Bath County’s poverty rate is 22.5 percent; Menifee County’s is 26.4 percent; Montgomery County’s is 17.8 percent; Morgan County’s is 22.3 percent; and Rowan County’s is 25.4 percent. The poverty rates of four of the counties are at least 1.5 times the US average. The service area also lags behind the nation in educational attainment, with four of the five counties’ bachelor’s degree attainment rates less than half the national average of 33.7 percent. Bath County’s bachelor degree attainment rate is 14.9 percent; Menifee County’s is 11.1 percent, roughly one-third the US rate; Montgomery County’s is 16.7 percent; Morgan County’s is 15.3 percent; and Rowan County’s is 25.8 percent.⁶ Rowan County’s rate is most likely higher due to the presence of Morehead State University within the county. Even taking this into consideration, Rowan County’s college degree attainment rate is nearly eight points less than the national average.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ 24-month average

² Stats America Economic Demographic Characteristics, U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates

³ Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Gateway Area Development District, 2022; p.3; 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁴ County Economic Status and Distressed Areas by State, FY 2023; Appalachian Regional Commission

⁵ Fiscal Year 2023 Persistent Poverty Counties, Economic Development Administration

⁶ 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Although substance abuse affects all socioeconomic levels, individuals who abuse opioids generally have lower levels of academic achievement, higher rates of poverty, and a greater likelihood of having an arrest record.⁷ This, in turn, has a negative impact on the workforce. The 2023 Gateway ADD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) describes substance abuse and “its ripple effects” as a “hindrance” to workforce development in the proposed service area, with employers reporting that it’s difficult to find workers who can pass drug screenings.⁸

According to studies, the opioid crisis was the cause for up to 20 percent of the workforce decline of Kentucky’s prime working-age men from 1999-2015.⁹ Additionally, University of Kentucky economists reasoned that the crisis led to the loss of up to 55,200 workers statewide.¹⁰

Compared to the national age-adjusted drug overdose death rate of 32.4, Montgomery County’s rate is 85.2, Rowan County’s is 84.5, and Bath County’s is an alarming 185.1. In 2022 Bath County had the highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the state.¹¹

Studies show that, contrasted with their urban counterparts, rural areas face additional challenges when dealing with substance abuse. In 2021, drug overdose deaths increased at a faster rate in rural areas.¹² Other challenges faced by rural areas include facility limitations, greater distances to care, and transportation coordination. One method for overcoming these challenges is expanding the provider workforce.¹³

Regional Assets

The Gateway CEDS identifies construction as one of the top five growing industries; health care also ranks among the top five industries. According to the CEDS, “With Saint Claire HealthCare, Appalachian Regional Healthcare, and several private practices located in the region, health care provides the most employment in the region for local clusters.” Education is the second-largest local cluster with five local school districts, Morehead State University (MSU), and two of Maysville Community & Technical College’s (MCTC) campuses located in the region. MCTC’s Rowan County campus includes a Postsecondary Center of Excellence in Advanced Manufacturing.¹⁴

Strategy to Address Needs

a. Targeted geographic approach

b. Partnerships and commitments

The Gateway ADD’s goals and objectives align with SCH’s Recompete plan, specifically Goal 3: Improve workforce readiness/develop, retain, and attract talented people, in which they explain: “A lack of workforce readiness and declining workforce participation diminish the potential for economic growth in the region. It will be necessary to work with our regional

⁷ The Impact of Opioid Use Disorder on Levels of Educational Attainment: Perceived Benefits and Consequences. January 2020

⁸ Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Gateway Area Development District, 2022; p.17

⁹ 2020 Overdose Fatality Report, Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, 2021

¹⁰ “The Effects of Opioids on Kentucky’s Workforce,” University of Kentucky College of Business and Economics: Center for Business and Economic Research, 2019

¹¹ Age-Adjusted Drug Overdose Mortality Rates, by Kentucky County of Residence, 2022

¹² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Wonder File

¹³ Opioid Use Disorder: Challenges and Opportunities in Rural Communities Fact Sheet, Pew, February 2019

¹⁴ Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Gateway Area Development District, 2022; pp. 6,7

partners to employ strategies and programs to fill the gaps.” An objective for Goal 5 supports the “delivery of rural health care and mental health services.”¹⁵

SCH has been proactively responding to the needs of northeastern Kentucky, including the five-county service area, for more than 60 years. The largest employer in the region, SCH was established in 1963 to bring a hospital to the rural, remote area. Under the umbrella of the Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education Center (AHEC), which SCH hosts, the Northeast Kentucky Substance Use Response Coalition was formed in 2018. With SCH as the fiscal agent, the eight-member coalition is combatting the substance abuse crisis that plagues the region. In recognition of their expertise in the field, as well as their skill managing grants, SCH employees have been chosen to make presentations to Health Resources & Services Administration grantees on best practices for jail reentry projects and second-chance employment. In June 2023, SCH was selected as one of five inaugural HRSA Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Champions, primarily for its work with jail reentry, of which linkages to second-chance employment is a huge component. SCH, which has also managed federal construction projects, has the experience, leadership, and reputation to undertake, manage, and provide oversight for this project.

In June 2023, SCH developed a partnership with MCTC to provide an Academic Practice Scholarship. This program improves the lives of people in the region by offering educational and employment opportunities and by removing economic barriers to education. Students enrolled in the program may utilize a pool of scholarship dollars to cover tuition as well as additional needs including books, fees, and uniforms. Upon acceptance into the program, participants agree to work full-time at SCH for a period of years post-graduation, depending on the following career paths: clinical opportunities – certified medical assistant, EMT, health science technology, medical lab tech, nursing (nurse aid, LPN, RN), paramedic, phlebotomy, physical therapy assistant, respiratory care; non-clinical opportunities – administrative office technology, computer and information technology, construction technology, HVAC, and medical information technology. Each program participant is assigned an SCH mentor to facilitate learning and provide professional support. Significant scholarship aid will be available for MCTC graduates who become SCH employees and are approved for continuing education. This includes technical education, bachelor’s degrees, and master’s degrees, which will provide opportunities for individuals to continue their education while advancing in the workforce and improving their lives and the lives of their family members. Since the program started in 2023, 13 individuals have taken part. All 13 are still enrolled in MCTC with 12 working for SCH while completing their education.

In addition to the Academic Practice Scholarship program, SCH offers second-chance employment opportunities to individuals who are in recovery. Since the program’s inception in in summer 2023, SCH has already made approximately 34 second-chance hires; 11 of these individuals also took part in the Academic Practice Scholarship program. SCH’s CEO reports that 30 of the employees are still employed and are performing well in their new careers. Together, these initiatives demonstrate SCH’s commitment to improving the lives of the individuals it serves and to increasing the health professions workforce (see letter of

¹⁵ Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Gateway Area Development District, 2023; p. 34,36

commitment). This creates a positive cycle of putting second-chance employees back into the workforce while also contributing to the communities' long-term health by producing additional clinicians to serve their health care needs, including mental health/substance abuse disorder, which helps more individuals become healthy enough to work. To accommodate an expansion of the Academic Practice Scholarship program and the additional second-chance hires, this component will necessitate the .40 FTE of two current SCH Human Resources employees.

SCH, via the Northeast Kentucky AHEC, has a strong pipeline of health careers programming, from high school to professional-level students. Despite this strong track record of health careers programming success, the region continues to experience health care access struggles, with health professions shortage areas (dental, mental, and primary care) across the five counties in the service area. According to the 2023 Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) Workforce Survey Report, the highest vacancy rates for hospitals are for registered and licensed practical nurses and certified nursing assistants. (As mentioned previously, SCH's partnership with MCTC includes pathways into these three clinical careers.) The KHA also reports a "significant gap between the number of vacancies and the number of new nurses coming into the profession." The KHA further notes, "Not only is there a severe shortage of nurses, but the nurses working in hospitals are caring for far more complex patients. Because so many delayed care during the pandemic, hospital patients are sicker and require longer times in the hospital. There has been a 10 percent rise in the average length of stay. This puts a greater burden on caregivers in hospitals and takes a toll on the entire healthcare workforce."¹⁶

A healthy workforce is an active workforce, which is why SCH has included a Clinical Workforce Training component in its Recompete plan. In 2022, the Northeast Kentucky AHEC started Creating Healthcare Advancement opportunities to promote Rural Kentucky under-Graduate nursing Excellence (CHARGE), which provides high school and college students interested in pursuing a nursing career additional educational and learning opportunities. We're proposing an expansion of the project, which will employ a second Health Careers Coordinator (to be hired) and provide stipends to recruit students into the nursing workforce via the CHARGE program. CHARGE, which has a track for high school students and another track for students who have been accepted into college nursing programs, allows students to receive additional opportunities such as job shadowing, study skills, resume writing, compassionate care skills, and introductions to various careers within the nursing field. Additionally, CHARGE for high school students helps strengthen a student's application for college or vocational nursing programs. Although each program lasts one year, a participant may apply for an additional year. The high school students will receive \$500 stipends; the college students will receive \$1,000 stipends, which will be disbursed in two payments, near the end of the fall and spring semesters.

High school students interested in applying must submit a completed application, a personal essay or video, a current high school transcript, and three professional references. Students meet quarterly via Zoom for check-ins with program administrators. Students accepted into the program must shadow their assigned mentor a minimum of two days and must participate in in-person monthly workshops. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA.

¹⁶ Kentucky's Nursing Workforce Crisis, Kentucky Hospital Association, n.d.

Requirements for the CHARGE college program include a completed application, the submission of an essay or video, the applicant's current college transcript and a letter of recommendation submitted directly by a college professor. Once admitted into the program, a participant must attend a minimum of two group study sessions per semester with their peers and meet with a program-approved tutor one-on-one for a minimum of two sessions per month at their college/university. Students will meet with program administrators for quarterly progress checks. Students will participate in monthly workshops via Zoom. The Zooms will be held in the evenings, dates and times pending schedule availability of guest speakers. Zooms will feature guest speakers within the nursing field speaking on a variety of topics (i.e. burnout prevention, the nursing shortage, study tips, etc.) and various health care facilities providing details of what opportunities they have for upcoming nursing graduates. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA within their collegiate nursing program.

The Clinical Workforce Training component also includes a train-the-trainer project with the objective to add more LCSW-S (licensed clinical social workers) and LPCA-S (licensed clinical social workers) into the service area. Both LCSWs and LPCCs have to complete therapy and undergo supervision training as well as receive certification through their boards at the state level before they can transition from, respectively, CSWs (clinical social workers) and LPCAs (licensed professional counselor associates) and charge for supervision hours. The CSWs and LPCAs will sign an agreement to work in the five-county service region for five years after becoming LCSW-S and LPCC-S. They could work for SCH or a behavioral treatment organization in the service area, helping to meet workforce demand. They will also be helping to treat our service population's behavioral health needs, thereby preparing these individuals for success in the workforce. Individuals who hold a supervision licensure are scarce, which provides the region with minimal mental health care and forces CSWs and LPCAs to leave the area to obtain supervision. According to the KHA Workforce Survey Report, the 2022 vacancy rate for LCSW-S was 12 percent.¹⁷ In our model, we will incentivize LCSW-S and LPCC-S to train and mentor CSWs and LPCAs via annual stipends.

Starting a nonprofit Life Learning Center (LLC) in Morehead will serve as the lynchpin for SCH's Recompete plan. Established in 2005 in urban northern Kentucky (Covington) to deliver a holistic, integrated continuum of education and care to help at-risk citizens learn, secure, and sustain a better way of living through gainful employment, LLC addresses underlying barriers including a lack of education, financial resources, and applicable skills.

LLC came to SCH's attention when Sr. Judine Lambert, vice president of mission at SCH, toured LLC's Covington location, meeting with administrators, candidates, and members. Seeing individuals with substance use disorders working to improve their lives by actively engaging in LLC's programs convinced Sr. Judine that SCH should explore a partnership with the organization. This led to other SCH administrators researching LLC and agreeing its model could not only be replicated in a rural setting, but could engender transformative and positive change in a region ravaged by the substance abuse epidemic.

¹⁷ Workforce Survey Report, The Status of Kentucky's Hospital Workforce, Kentucky Hospital Association, 2023, p. 39

LLC's trademarked 12-week Foundations for a Better Life Curriculum focuses on five domains of life: physical, financial, spiritual, emotional, and relational. LLC helps its candidates/members find sustainable and meaningful employment while teaching soft skills, hosting mock interviews, and helping to craft resumes. LLC has been designated as a local Recovery Community Center by the federal grant-funded Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE). LLC serves as a focal point of resources for community-based recovery support and includes peer support, mutual aid groups, employment, and skills training.

Upon acceptance into the program, applicants are identified as candidates. A new cohort of candidates begins every two weeks. Before, during, and after the program, candidates access a plethora of care continuum services to mitigate barriers as deemed appropriate. Following completion of the transformational skills program, candidates who commit to a substance-free lifestyle and secure full-time employment become members.

By triaging their fundamental needs, candidates have the opportunity and environment to focus on their higher-level needs, supporting their educational success. Candidates also participate in regular individualized meetings with an assigned peer support specialist. The peer support specialists at LLC are dispersed throughout the five domains to provide extended support and accountability as candidates are setting personal and career goals. Peer support specialists continue tracking and monitoring progress for three years after graduation from LLC. Additionally, candidates and members have on-site access to a variety of residential services. The clothing closet, for example, provides candidates with donated clothing they can wear at job interviews and during the first weeks of employment, that crucial time when they're getting back on their feet.

Committed residential partners at the Morehead location include Frontier Housing (see letter of commitment), an affordable housing development organization in northeastern Kentucky that delivers HUD-approved counseling, which includes budget counseling, financial counseling, and homeownership counseling. According to LLC representatives, approximately five graduates of their 2023 cohorts who had exposure to a similar residential partner have been able to secure home ownership loans. Although this number might not seem impressive, it is when you consider that 76 percent of LLC candidates in 2023 said they struggled to meet basic needs and 68 percent had no income when they began the program. Whitaker Bank (see letter of commitment) will also serve as a residential partner, offering on-site advice to LLC candidates on opening checking and savings accounts and advising those with negative banking histories on how to rebuild their status.

Some individuals participating in First Day Forward, SCH's grant-funded holistic jail reentry program, have articulated that before developing substance use disorders, they worked in construction and other vocational fields. As construction has been identified as one of the top five growing industries in the region, we have secured a commitment from UA Local 248 in northeastern Kentucky to serve as a residential partner in the LLC to recruit candidates and to fill construction jobs. Local construction company, 6House Solutions, has committed to hire LLC graduates. Walker Construction and Materials has also agreed to interview graduates for open positions and to conduct mock interviews as a residential partner. (See letters of commitment.)

Such partnerships are important because, after substance use treatment and maintenance programming is complete, LLC's educational curriculum is designed to give individuals dignity, skills, and open not just employment opportunities but career mobility. LLC partnerships with local employers develop career opportunities that include advancement prospects, health insurance, and more than just a living wage. In other words, the essence of the Department of Labor's Good Jobs Principles. The LLC-Covington location is making transformative improvement in participants' lives and we expect the same to happen at the LLC-Morehead site. According to the organization's 2023 impact report, only 11 percent of candidates were employed at the start of the program – and none had benefits. Compare this with the 87 percent who were employed prior to program completion. As detailed in our commitment letters and commitment index, several of our workforce partners have committed to employ LLC graduates in jobs that provide insurance and all at wages above the service area's per capita income level.

SCH has secured commitments from eight workforce partners, who have committed to hiring 10 graduates of the LLC curriculum in year one of the project. Just as important are the 10 commitments from the residential partners, most of whom we expect to become workforce partners after they've had the opportunity to witness the work of the LLC and the quality of the members and graduates they produce. As the LLC CEO has explained, some employers need to see the success of the LLC before believing the organization can produce work-ready employees. In fact, according to the CEO, as recently as 2017, the LLC-Covington site had zero workforce partners. The organization now has 283.

LLC-Covington experienced further growth in 2019 through its reentry partnerships with a local detention center and commonwealth's attorney office and the creation of the Multidisciplinary Recovery Reentry Team (MRRT) model to activate communication among reentry stakeholders that provide care interventions and resources to individuals being released from incarceration. MRRT has become a community-focused initiative, supporting systemic change for justice-involved individuals as they access and receive the appropriate level of care. LLC and the MRRT spearhead jail population reduction while providing aftercare and treatment pathways to individuals released from incarceration. This multifaceted approach, which represents another approach to addressing equity, avoids the need to modify drug treatment court orders, reduces sanctions, and provides rehabilitation through community resources and collaborative care.

According to LLC's 2022 annual report, 78 percent of participants lacked a resume when beginning the program, 60 percent lacked work history or had a gap in employment, and 85 percent had a criminal background. Having a criminal background can be an obstacle to employment. One study found that unemployment among formerly incarcerated individuals is five times higher than the general public.¹⁸ Other challenges for individuals in recovery to find employment include stigma, discrimination, treatment-related constraints, mental or physical health problems, and limited education and job skills. These studies align with LLC statistics. According to the impact report, only 22 percent had attended or graduated from college and 68 percent struggled with mental health issues.

¹⁸ "Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people," Couloute, L., Kopf, D.; Prison Policy Initiative; 2018

As LLC considers graduates who commit to securing full-time employment and committing to a substance-free lifestyle to be members for life, resources such as skills training and those offered by residential partners will be available to them in perpetuity. What's more, graduates will have the opportunity to participate in SCH's collaboration with MCTC on the Academic Practice Scholarship program and to learn about educational opportunities offered through residential partner, Morehead State University. As referenced in MSU's letter of commitment, these opportunities include individual and group sessions on such topics as GED assistance, resume and job searches, ACT testing, reading and/or math literacy, employable certificates, financial aid completion, financial literacy counseling, and nursing entrance exam waivers.

SCH will allow the LLC the use of a building that currently houses its Home Health services. According to the engineering report, the 50-plus year old 11,400-square-foot building has been well maintained during its use. Many of components included in the original construction, however, are now outdated and will require renovation to improve energy efficiency and to become compliant with current codes. Each level of the building will cohesively work with the others to serve LLC participants. The main level consists of approximately 3,920 square feet and will include areas for administrative offices, multi-purpose meeting rooms for group counseling, individual counseling, and dining/commercial kitchen. Level II consists of approximately 4,530 square feet that will offer a location for addiction recovery, public meetings, and forum space in the auditorium and a specialized care room. Level III consists of 2,950 square feet that will accommodate additional administrative offices, a retail clothing area for both men and women, a full-service computer lab, and commercial laundry area.

In addition to the building, which will be leased to the LLC for 20 years, SCH will incur the expense of relocating the Home Health offices. This demonstrates another of SCH's ongoing commitments to the project. While renovation is taking place, the LLC will rent an office space, which will allow the LLC to start offering services immediately.

As noted in the letter of commitment, Pathways, Inc., will provide office space so the LLC can operate satellite sites in the service area's other four counties and offer initial screenings to residents in those counties. After enrollment into the LLC, participants in those counties who lack transportation can utilize van rides to the LLC-Morehead site to participate in the curriculum, including taking employment and soft skills classes and meeting with residential partners. (Many individuals in recovery and/or exiting the judicial system lack transportation or have lost their license due to conviction. According to the LLC's 2023 impact report, 52 percent of candidates at the LLC-Covington site lacked transportation.) For up to 12 weeks after graduation, participants in Bath, Menifee, and Morgan counties will be offered the opportunity to use the van services to transport them back and forth to their jobs. This is especially important in those counties, which lack any public transportation. As Montgomery and Rowan counties have limited public transportation, participants in those counties will be provided monthly transportation vouchers. Public transportation is so limited in Montgomery County that the transportation service has committed to employing a part-time driver and purchasing an additional vehicle to accommodate the increased demand for services, which represents the project's potential to affect transformative change.

To ensure the proper management of the grant, SCH's proposal includes a Governance component, which includes hiring a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC) and a Recompete Project Administrator. Gateway ADD will provide technical assistance, overseeing grants administration in the pre-award, post-award, and closeout phases of the grant. The RPC will provide oversight and management of the project as well as collaborate with and identify other partners, working closely with the LLC as well as our identified partners including behavioral health (Pathways, Inc.); education (MCTC and MSU); and other private, public, and nonprofit organizations. The Recompete Project Administrator will provide additional management, collaborating with internal stakeholders such as the RCP and two SCH Human Resources employees who manage the Academic Practice Scholarship program, as well as external stakeholders such as the Gateway ADD and the LLC, to ensure Recompete objectives are met. Our Governance component will include the formation of an Advisory Board that comprises formerly incarcerated individuals; individuals living successfully in recovery; a representative from Probation and Parole; a representative from the Administrative Office of the Courts; two LLC program graduates (once a cohort has completed the curriculum); a representative from the workforce board; at least one individual living below the poverty line; and at least one representative from the Academic Practice Scholarship program. The Advisory Board, which will meet quarterly with the RPC, a Recompete Project Administrator, and LLC representatives, will promote equity by ensuring the population most in need of our services is being heard.

LLC will add to the regional workforce and stimulate economic development by creating new jobs in the area. LLC will hire coordinators to support their respective divisions with tasks such as candidate support, data tracking, and program delivery. Based on poverty rates in the service area and extrapolating the number of individuals served by the LLC-Covington, we expect the LLC-Morehead site to graduate 79 candidates in the first year and 158 thereafter annually, for a total of 711 in the project period. LLC-Morehead will be led by a Regional COO/Education Coordinator who will be supported in organization, communications, and operations by an Administrative Assistant. An Enrollment Coordinator will "float" between LLC-Morehead and the satellite sites. This position will maintain multi-county enrollment pipelines and functions; an Education and Employment Coordinator will create functionality for both employment and education operations within a single position and supervise two Peer Support Specialists. The Care and Transportation Coordinator will organize and coordinate outside care needs of candidates including transportation. Four Peer Support Specialists/Drivers will be employed to facilitate driving the transportation vans. Having Peer Support Specialists double as drivers creates more opportunities to engage with their cohorts.

Each team member will have specific roles within the project and will be cross-trained to provide access to services as needed. In addition to costs associated with employing personnel, establishing an LLC in Morehead will include technology start up and training, which will equip the team to teach the Foundations for a Better Life and to utilize data sources for team members and participants.

The components of the Recompete plan's projects cohesively support one another. The LLC, Clinical Workforce Training, and Academic Practice Scholarship components feature a peer support or mentorship program; the Clinical Workforce Training and Academic Practice

Scholarship components support the workforce of the health care industry, which the Gateway ADD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy identified as a top regional industry; and all components improve workforce readiness.

SCH values the residents of the region it serves and will utilize their voices and experiences as Peer Support Specialists in the plan's projects. The Recompete plan also aligns with Good Jobs Principles by actively recruiting and empowering qualified applicants and workers from underserved communities who will seek careers that offer fair pay and benefits in safe, healthy, and accessible workplaces with opportunities for career and skills advancement.