

Rural Business Programs • Rural Business Development Grant

Welding for a Better Workforce

For the rural residents of Fentress County, access to training programs that provide the advanced skills needed to compete for available jobs can be challenging. Traveling outside the area for training is expensive and often conflicts with current employment. Welding is one advanced skill with unmet demand in the region. The Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) has three nearby locations, but does not have the capacity or the equipment to train enough welders to meet regional demand.

The Fentress County Board of Education sought to eliminate this shortage by applying for a Rural Business Development Grant to purchase welding equipment for the post-secondary welding program offered through TCAT Oneida/Huntsville at Clarkrange High School.



One of the Lincoln Electric Downflex 200-M Weld Fume Downdraft Tables purchased for the welding program at Clarkrange High School.

The Fentress County Board of Education purchased the welding equipment in the fall of 2020 and has already witnessed the results of increased capacity to train post-secondary welding students. Enrollment in the program went from six students to 21 in the fall semester of 2021.

This welding equipment and the training received by the post-secondary students will directly support advanced manufacturing industries in Fentress and the surrounding counties, by providing the skills necessary to fill in-demand jobs. It will provide the opportunity for rural residents to attain higher wages, higher demand, and higher skill jobs. Rural Development continues to invest in rural America by supporting the creation and preservation of quality jobs in rural communities and working towards a better rural workforce.

Obligation Amount: \$50,000 Grant

Date of Obligation: Fiscal Year 2020

Congressional District: Representative Rose, TN-06; Senators Marsha Blackburn and Bill Hagerty

Partners: Fentress County Board of Education, Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT)

Demographics: Fentress County, Tennessee

Impact: USDA-RD grant funding provided access to specialized welding equipment to educate and prepare post-secondary students for advanced manufacturing positions.