



UNA WORC / ALPHABET Grant Program Information

What is the WORC / Alphabet Grant Program?

- The Alabama Partnership for Healthcare and Business Education and Training (ALPHABET) engages health and business leaders and the University of North Alabama to close gaps in workforce demand in the State of Alabama by promoting education and job training opportunities for incumbent workers. The partnership serves many of Alabama's ARC counties including Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Limestone, Marion, and Winston. Manufacturing is the largest employment sector (at 24%) followed by healthcare and social assistance (at 11%), each of which rely heavily on nursing and business and professional occupations that are in short supply. ALPHABET partners include business and healthcare providers and the Shoals Area Chamber of Commerce, which will assist to recruit incumbent workers and will provide job development and placement assistance. UNA will provide intensive student advisement, coaching, and academic assistance to ensure a high rate of completion. The project will lead eligible workers to enhanced employment opportunities in occupations with growing demand in North Alabama.
- Regional hospitals (North Alabama Medical Center and Helen Keller Hospital) form the hub of the healthcare industry in the project area. Business and professional service employers round out the partnership representing small and medium sized employers in the region (TASUS, First Metro Bank, Bank Independent, CB&S Bank, Abrams & Associates, Books-A-Million, TNT Fireworks, YMCA of North Alabama) that will provide on the job training and employment opportunities for participants. These businesses employ nursing and business professionals and have partnered with UNA and the Shoals Chamber of Commerce to recruit, educate, and train workers, leading to enhanced workforce skills and direct benefits to employers. UNA has committed to the success of these students via scholarship opportunities, mentoring and counseling, on the job training placements, career counseling, and job search services.
- ALPHABET is designed to meet the demand for nursing and business occupations with two education and training tracks targeting incumbent workers from business and healthcare employers in North Alabama. Emergent and dislocated workers may also participate, but the project will target existing businesses' incumbent workers, which will strengthen the workforce of those partners.
- A priority will be given to applicants who meet Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidelines for low income, with qualified veterans and their spouses receiving priority followed by individuals recovering from a substance use disorder, who have completed a substance abuse program and are seeking to maintain recovery.
- In **Track 1 (Nursing)**, the partnership will recruit currently licensed RNs to the online Bachelor of Nursing (BSN) program, which can be completed within two years.
- In **Track 2 (Business)**, the partnership will recruit students with 60 or more college credit hours into the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) online program. Both tracks will use online or hybrid platforms to allow working participants to continue working. Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC) funds will assist with tuition, fees, technology, on the job training, and other eligible expenses based on an individual student assessment, and will permit individuals to increase employability, job security, promotion potential, and earnings while bolstering the workforce of existing business and industry. Participants will be required to work in their field during the project in an existing position or a training opportunity developed in cooperation with business partners.

Who is Eligible to Apply for the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program?

- It depends on the degree which you are pursuing; specific criteria are cited for each degree below:
- **Bachelor of Nursing (BSN)**... You must be a currently licensed RN.
- **Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)**... You must have previously completed at least 60 college credit hours.

Who is Not Eligible for the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program?

- If you were enrolled in or attended classes at UNA during the semester *immediately* prior to your current anticipated enrollment, you are ineligible to apply for the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program.

What are the goals of the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program?

- **Overall Goals:**
 1. 65 students will earn college credits with the goal of attaining a bachelor's degree.
 2. Full-time employment within selected occupations for participants.
 3. Job security and promotional opportunities for participants.
 4. Higher income and earnings for participants (measured by a follow up questionnaire at 6 months from completion of training).
- **Track 1 (Nursing) Goals:** Recruit 25 and place graduates in full-time employment in *registered nurse* occupations (measured by a job placement survey).
- **Track 2 (Business) Goals:** Recruit 40 and place graduates in full-time employment in *professional and business services* occupations (measured by a job placement survey).

What personal resources are available for me at UNA?

- Principal Recruiters in UNA's Anderson College of Nursing & Health Professions and the College of Business will serve as outreach coordinators for the project. These recruiters engage in outreach that identifies a pool of students each year who would be admitted to UNA but would not enroll due to financial or other challenges. Recruiters will be in contact with program partners in an effort to recruit from among qualified incumbents, and they will market and promote within the region for other participants. Recruiters will refer potential participants to the UNA Career Center, where the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator will determine need and eligibility.
- Following a favorable initial application, the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator will approve participants for the program, and will continue to provide guidance regarding UNA admissions, the financial aid process, and eligibility for grant funds.
- Once enrolled with a financial aid package including UNA Works Scholarships, students will receive an individual assessment to develop a program of study, including academic advisement and course selection, tutoring and counseling, and a performance plan for the student to have personal counseling with the Career Center and other student services counselors under the guidance of the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator, who will be assisted by the University Success Center, which provides academic support services.
- An Academic Advisor/Education Coordinator in each track will be responsible for academic advisement and overseeing student's progress in their program of study. Every student must be capable of completing a bachelor's degree within the timeframe provided by the grant (i.e. within 6 academic terms and by August 2022).
- Academic Advisors/Education Coordinators will provide support directly to students in their respective tracks, assist other advisors who work directly with each student, and will coordinate with the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator in the Career Center to ensure student success and progress toward education and training goals.

What expenses does the WORC/ALPHABET Program cover?

- The central financial mechanism of the program will be an Individual Training Account (ITA) not to exceed \$12,000 in total for each of 65 participants recruited to one of two occupational tracks. Funds from an individual's account may be used to pay for tuition and fees (not to exceed \$8,500), a living stipend (not to exceed \$3,380) and technology (not to exceed \$1,750).
- Technology expenses include computers and related equipment. The living stipend is contingent upon satisfactory performance and the availability of tuition assistance from other sources.
- Students may be provided support for up to 6 academic terms (full-time or part-time) to complete their program of study.
- Students will be expected to maintain employment in their field, and internship opportunities will only be offered to those who are not currently working in their field/discipline and have a desire to learn a new skill set. Any funds that are not allocated and used will be recaptured to expand the pool of participants and increase program performance.

Is there any other financial aid available?

- In addition to financial aid available through traditional student grants and loans, UNA provides *UNA Works Scholarships*, which provide tuition assistance to students. In **Track 1 (Nursing)**, the University of North Alabama offers a 20% scholarship to graduates of an Alabama Community College System (ACCS) school of nursing. In **Track 2 (Business)** the *Finish in 60* program offers a 15% scholarship for tuition and fees for students with 60 or more credit hours who are returning to study.

What is the Application Process for Eligible Program Participants?

1. Optional, but advised. Students should contact the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator, Dr. John Gurley, early in the process. Email: worc@una.edu. Telephone: 256-765-4957.
2. Apply for admission to UNA at <https://www.una.edu/apply/index.html> and gain acceptance to the ACONHP RN-BSN program **OR** the COB BBA program.
3. Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>.
4. Meet with your Academic Advisor/Education Coordinator to discuss your interest in and eligibility for participation in the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program.
5. Review the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program Information document in its entirety to include applicant guidelines and responsibilities.
6. Complete the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program Application to include a brief paragraph describing your commitment to completing this degree within the specified time frame (no later than August 2022) and how earning the degree will benefit your career goals. The application can be obtained from your Academic Advisor/Education Coordinator, through the **Career Center** at the following link (<https://www.una.edu/career/index.html>), or by emailing worc@una.edu.
7. Schedule a face-to-face, telephone, or Skype interview with the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator, Dr. John Gurley, at worc@una.edu. The purpose of this meeting is to affirm your commitment to pursuing a degree and full-time employment upon graduation. WORC/ALPHABET guidelines and responsibilities will also be discussed.
8. The WORC/ALPHABET application process also requires completion of an Alabama Career Center System (ACCS) verification form. This process requires applicants to complete an online application form at <https://joblink.alabama.gov/ada/r/> followed by a walk-in appointment at the Alabama Career Center. **NOTE: Applicants may be provisionally approved prior to completing this application/appointment but must complete it prior to final acceptance to the WORC/ALPHABET Grant Program and prior to the first day of classes.**
9. Review and complete the WORC/ALPHABET Applicant Checklist and submit to worc@una.edu prior to your first day of classes.
10. The WORC/ALPHABET application process will not be considered complete until all steps above are finalized, received, and approved by the Program Coordinator. Funds may not be disbursed until all actions are completed and approved.

What are the program guidelines?

- You must complete the application process in its entirety to be considered for participation. Final approval may not be granted until all necessary steps are completed.
- You must complete your degree within 6 semesters and no later than August 2022. If you complete your degree, any provided computer/equipment is yours to keep. If you withdraw from the program or are terminated for unsatisfactory progress, the computer/equipment must be returned immediately to UNA and turned into the Program Coordinator.
- If you are provided with a computer as part of the grant, you must complete the WORC Computer Equipment Lease Agreement and agree to comply with the University of North Alabama's Information Technologies Acceptable Use Statement which can be found at <https://www.una.edu/its/una-it-policy.html>.
- If you withdraw from a class or fail a class, the grant monies provided for that class will be deducted from your training account and will not be available for future expenses. Students who fail to meet satisfactory academic progress will be ineligible to receive stipend payments or further program assistance, except as approved for extraordinary circumstances or hardships.
- For students with extraordinary circumstances such as poor health or hardships that temporarily impact their ability to remain in the grant program, readmission will be determined on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Program Coordinator and Principal Investigator. Any student who reenters the grant program must have the ability to complete a bachelor's degree within the time frames specified by the grant. Furthermore, the academic policies of your program will supersede those of the grant (e.g. GPA, withdrawals, and course completion requirements).

What are my responsibilities?

- You must maintain adequate progress and a minimum 2.0 GPA (please note that your specific program may require a higher minimum GPA; contact your Academic Advisor/Education Coordinator for specifics).
- If approved for a living stipend, you must submit required financial documentation of your expenses in order for funds to be disbursed; e.g. utility bills, rental payments, and child care expenses.
- You must maintain periodic contact with your Academic Advisor/Education Coordinator and the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator to evaluate your progress and address potential obstacles to success.
- You will be invited to participate in a Canvas course and will be expected to utilize this university-based application to maintain communication with the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator.

Questions?

- Please contact your Academic Advisor/Education Coordinator directly or the WORC/ALPHABET Program Coordinator, Dr. John Gurley, at worc@una.edu.

Forms

[Application](#)

[ACCS Verification](#)

[Applicant Checklist](#)