

AmeriHealth Caritas Bridge Pilot

Request for Proposals (RFP) Overview and Guidelines

[RFP Submission Link](#)

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Important Dates and Milestones

RFP Released	RFP Information Session	Office Hours	RFP Deadline	Colleges Selected and Notified
October 1, 2026	Click the link to join: <u>Information Session: Oct 7 (10:30 - 11:30)</u>	Click the link to join: <u>Office Hours: Oct 27 (3:30 - 4:00)</u> <u>Office Hours: Nov 5 (2:00-2:30)</u>	November 18, 2026 Electronic Submission by 11:59 pm	December 16, 2026

**AmeriHealth Caritas Bridge Pilot
Request for Proposals (RFP) Overview and Guidelines****A. Program Overview**

The **Bridge Pilot** is a two-year, \$3 million initiative of the North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation, implemented in partnership with the North Carolina Community College System Office, and funded by AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina. The Pilot is designed as a student-focused economic mobility workforce training model that strengthens the connection between healthcare workforce needs and student access, credential attainment, employment, and continued advancement.

The Bridge Pilot responds to two connected challenges. North Carolina communities and healthcare employers need stronger pipelines of qualified frontline workers, particularly in rural areas and communities with high Medicaid enrollment. At the same time, many individuals who are seeking rapid entry into healthcare careers face financial, personal, logistical, and institutional barriers that make it difficult to enroll, complete training, earn a recognized credential, transition into employment, or continue advancing.

Bridge builds on lessons from the NC Community College Boost initiative, which applied evidence-informed student success strategies to curriculum students. The Bridge Pilot tests how those strategies can be adapted for students enrolled in short-term Continuing Education healthcare programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials and employment. The model centers on three core components: Targeted Financial Assistance, Proactive Quality Success Coaching, and Structured Healthcare Pathways.

Through a competitive Request for Funding process, three local community colleges will be selected, with each receiving a two-year allocation of \$756,667 to participate in the Bridge Pilot. Selected colleges will use the funding to support eligible student expenses, success coaching, and institutional capacity needed to deliver the model and track program implementation strategies and student outcomes.

The Bridge Pilot extends beyond funding training or providing financial assistance to students. It is designed to test whether a coordinated combination of student supports, structured pathways, employer connection, and institutional practices can help more students enter, complete, earn, and advance through short-term healthcare pathways. Findings from the Pilot will inform decisions about which practices to sustain, adapt, expand, and/or replicate. The Pilot is expected to serve up to approximately 1,000 students statewide across the three selected colleges.

B. RFP Design Framework

The RFP Design Framework describes the underlying logic of the Bridge Pilot and how that logic is reflected across the RFP application. This section helps applicants understand how the community and service area landscape should inform pathway selection, student-support strategies, institutional capacity, targeted outcomes, and ultimately the transition from a time-limited pilot to sustainable implementation.

1. Using Community and Service-Area Data to Inform Bridge Design (RFP Section 1)

Bridge prioritizes serving individuals in rural areas and communities with high Medicaid enrollment, but the community and service area analysis should go beyond restating priority geographies. Colleges are expected to interpret relevant datasets to understand and explain how the local landscape affects residents' access to healthcare training and employment, as well as the community's need for a stronger healthcare workforce pipeline. Relevant indicators may include economic Tier designation, rural/urban status, Medicaid enrollment, Health Professional Shortage Area designations, poverty and income, unemployment, transportation, childcare, broadband access, aging-population trends, occupational demand, wages, and employer input. Colleges may include other statistical data.

This RFP aims to align the data to program design. Community and workforce information should help the college identify the most significant barriers and pipeline gaps affecting the population it intends to serve, then connect those findings to the proposed healthcare occupation, credential, recruitment strategy, student supports, employer engagement, and pathway structure. This makes the needs analysis the foundation for determining how Bridge resources and core components should be applied locally.

To support a consistent and equitable application process, applicants will receive a Bridge Pilot County Data Metrics Excel workbook containing standardized community, demographic, economic, healthcare-access, and workforce indicators relevant to the RFP. Providing a common data source ensures that applicants and reviewers are working from the same baseline information, reduces differences that may result from varying institutional research or grant-development capacity, and allows colleges to devote more time to interpreting the data and connecting it to their proposed population, healthcare pathway, student barriers, and workforce strategy rather than locating and compiling the data independently.

2. From Community Need to Program Design (RFP Section 1)

The RFP design framework helps colleges move from understanding local conditions to making informed program-design decisions. Community, economic, healthcare-access, and workforce data provide important context, but data alone does not determine the right response. Colleges should combine this information with employer and local/regional stakeholder engagement to identify the most significant workforce pipeline gaps and capacity limitations affecting the proposed service area, student population, and healthcare occupation.

The RFP asks colleges to identify the one to three most important pipeline issues their proposed Bridge project is intended to address. These issues may include limited access to training, student completion barriers, credential-attainment gaps, weak connections between training and employment, curriculum or skills alignment concerns, or limited opportunities for continued advancement. Employer and stakeholder input is especially important to confirm where these gaps occur, how they affect hiring and workforce supply, and whether the proposed credential and pathway respond to local and regional needs.

This step creates a clear foundation for the college's Bridge design. The identified pipeline gaps should directly inform decisions about recruitment, program delivery, student supports, credentialing strategies, employer engagement, and advancement opportunities. In this way, the needs assessment is not an end in itself; it becomes the basis for determining what the college will do differently through Bridge and why those strategies fit the students and workforce needs it intends to serve.

Below are suggested pipeline gaps and capacity limitations. Applicants may identify other issues, but common examples include:

- **Access to training:** Geography, transportation, scheduling, cost, limited cohorts, or lack of convenient delivery options may prevent students from entering training.
- **Curriculum or skills alignment:** Employers may report gaps in technical, professional, digital, documentation, patient-care, or job-readiness skills.
- **Credential-attainment gap:** Students may complete training but not attempt or earn the required third-party credential because of cost, scheduling, documentation, exam readiness, or insufficient follow-up.
- **Training-to-employment mismatch:** Training may be available, but the pathway may not connect effectively to employer hiring, credential acceptance, clinical-to-hire opportunities, or advancement.
- **Student completion barriers:** Transportation, childcare, work schedules, basic needs, background checks, immunizations, supplies, or other short-term barriers may contribute to stop-out.
- **Advancement gap:** Students may earn a first credential but lack a clear next step into another credential, apprenticeship, curriculum pathway, wage progression, or employer-supported advancement.

3. Understanding the Student's Journey through the Pathway (RFP Section 2)

A key RFP design feature is its focus on students. The questions are designed to help determine whether the college's proposed Bridge design can support students across the full sequence from initial enrollment through training completion, credential attainment, employment, and continued advancement. This student-journey approach reflects the broader Bridge framework of **Enroll → Complete → Credential → Employ**.

For RFP planning purposes, the student journey can be viewed through four connected stages:

- **Enrollment.** Students must first identify, access, and enter an appropriate healthcare pathway. The RFP therefore examines whether colleges understand the community and its population they intend to serve, can reach individuals who may benefit from short-term healthcare training, provide accurate career and pathway information, and address barriers between initial interest and enrollment.
- **Completion.** Enrollment alone is not enough if students cannot persist through training. The RFP examines whether colleges have identified the financial, personal, logistical, academic, and institutional barriers that may interrupt participation and whether targeted financial assistance, proactive coaching, and coordinated supports are designed to address those barriers.
- **Credential Attainment.** Course completion is an important milestone, but Bridge places additional emphasis on whether students earn the certification, registry, license, or other recognized credential employers require or value. The RFP therefore considers credential requirements, examination preparation and access, testing costs, documentation requirements, and follow-up after training completion.
- **Employment and Advancement.** Bridge is intended to result in workforce entry and longer-term economic mobility, not credential attainment as an endpoint. The RFP examines how the first credential connects to related healthcare employment and whether students have a realistic next step, such as an additional credential, apprenticeship, curriculum pathway, employer-supported advancement opportunity, or wage progression.

4. Building the Right Healthcare Pathway (RFP Section 2)

Once the need is understood, the focus shifts to the healthcare pathway itself. Bridge supports short-term healthcare training that leads to a recognized credential and a realistic connection to employment. Colleges must consider whether they have the instructional capacity, facilities, equipment, clinical or work-based learning opportunities, credentialing infrastructure, and enrollment capacity needed to deliver the proposed pathway successfully. For this pilot, a list of eligible pathways has been predetermined. The eligible pathways are listed in section#5 below. The pathway should also extend beyond training completion. Bridge is designed around a first credential plus a next step. Students should understand how the initial credential connects to employment and what opportunities exist for continued education, another credential, and advancement within healthcare, including wage progression. In this way, the Pilot connects immediate workforce entry with longer-term economic mobility.

5. Proposed Bridge Pathways - Eligible Short-term CE Healthcare Courses (RFP Section 2)

Bridge begins with selecting an eligible short-term healthcare course or combination of courses that responds to documented workforce need and can be delivered successfully during the Pilot. Colleges should consider not only which occupations are in demand, but also whether they have the instructional capacity, prior experience, enrollment potential, credentialing infrastructure, and employer connection necessary to support students from entry through employment.

Pathway selection should also reflect the population the college intends to serve. Community and service-area conditions identified earlier in the RFP should inform how the college recruits students, structures delivery, addresses access barriers, and supports progression through the credential. Because each selected college will serve a substantial number of students over the two-year grant period, applicants should choose pathways that are both workforce-relevant and operationally feasible at the required scale. The following eligible short-term Continuing Education healthcare courses may serve as the primary foundation for Bridge pathways. Colleges may propose one or more complementary courses as part of their Bridge pathway, but they must align with the eligible list below. While not required, we highly encourage colleges to integrate Human Resources Development (HRD) course offerings into their pathway design.

CCL Course Title	Course ID	Max Hours
Behavioral Health Technician	MHA-3000	480
Cardiovascular Technician/Monitoring (EKG)	ICV-3111	134
Direct Support Professional (DSP)	DDT-3120	58
Emergency Medical Technician Initial	EMS-4200	288
Home Health Aide	NAS-3216	90
Medical Assistant	MED-3300	648
Medication Aide	PHM-4100	29
NC Community Health Worker	HEA-3121	173
Nurse Aide Level I	NAS-3240	221
Nurse Aide Level II	NAS-3241	192
Patient Care Technician	NAS-3355	336
Pharmacy Technician	PHM-3250	245
Phlebotomy Technician	PBT-3022	258

Reminder: Bridge funding supports the student-success and implementation components of the model, including targeted assistance, coaching, pathway navigation, and related supports. It is not intended to create the underlying instructional capacity needed to offer an eligible course.

6. Applying the Bridge Model to Student Barriers (RFP Section 3)

Building on lessons from the NCCCS Boost student success initiative, the Bridge Model brings forward three core strategic components for student access and success for Workforce Continuing Education students: Targeted Financial Assistance, Proactive Quality Success Coaching, and Structured Healthcare Pathways.

These components respond directly to the barriers and workforce-pipeline gaps the college identified. Targeted financial assistance can help address costs that interfere with enrollment, participation, credential attainment, or completion. Proactive coaching provides consistent support across critical milestones rather than waiting until a student experiences a crisis or stops attending. Structured pathway navigation helps students understand program requirements, credential expectations, employment connections, and the next available step.

The goal is to create a **coordinated student experience** in which financial support, coaching, pathway information, employer connection, and college resources work together from entry through advancement.

7. Building the Institutional Capacity to Support Students (RFP Section 4)

Bridge is also an institutional model. Successful adoption and/or implementation in whole or in part requires coordination across Continuing Education, student services, financial administration, institutional research and data functions, workforce development, employer engagement, and college leadership. The RFP therefore looks beyond the classroom to the systems, people, partnerships, and decision-making structures needed to support students consistently.

This cross-functional approach is important because short-term workforce students often interact with multiple offices and programs. Bridge is intended to reduce fragmentation by strengthening student handoffs, resource coordination, data tracking, fiscal administration, and shared responsibility for student progress.

Funding is similarly expected to follow the program design. Student-support funds, coaching resources, and college-capacity funds should connect to documented student barriers, implementation needs, and the overall Bridge strategy rather than being treated as separate funding streams.

8. Measuring Success (RFP Section 6)

The Bridge Pilot is designed to measure success beyond enrollment and participation by examining whether students complete training, earn recognized healthcare credentials, enter employment, and continue advancing. Targeted outcomes include increasing program completion rates by approximately 10–15% among Bridge participants, strengthening credential attainment in critical entry-level healthcare pathways, and reducing attrition by addressing non-academic barriers such as transportation, childcare, and basic needs. The Pilot will also track employment outcomes, including placement in rural and Medicaid-serving healthcare settings, the relationship between credential attainment and employment, and early workforce entry for students who secure related employment before completing the credential.

Bridge will also assess broader student-success and learning outcomes, including confidence, self-efficacy, career clarity, satisfaction with coaching and wraparound supports, and continued enrollment in additional credentials or degree pathways. At the system level, the Pilot will generate evidence about which strategies are most effective for short-term healthcare students. Through independent evaluation with the Belk Center, Bridge aims to document impact, support continuous improvement, and inform the development of a replicable model that can strengthen healthcare workforce pathways across North Carolina and contribute to broader national learning about student success and economic mobility.

9. From Pilot to Implementation (RFP Section 6)

Bridge's long-term purpose is Pilot-to-Implementation.

The Pilot provides an opportunity to test how targeted financial assistance, proactive coaching, structured pathways, employer engagement, and coordinated institutional practices can strengthen short-term healthcare workforce pathways.

The expectation is not that every Pilot activity will continue exactly as designed. Colleges will use evidence and experience to determine which practices to sustain, adapt, expand, incorporate into ongoing operations, or discontinue. Effective practices may then inform broader Continuing Education healthcare programming, statewide implementation, and national replication.

Viewed together, the RFP follows one connected progression:

Community and Workforce Need → Healthcare Pathway → Student Success Strategy → Institutional Capacity → Aligned Resources → Outcomes, Learning, and Replication

That progression reflects Bridge's central purpose: to help individuals, particularly those in rural areas and communities with high Medicaid enrollment—move successfully through short-term healthcare pathways and into employment and continued advancement, while helping colleges build stronger, more sustainable healthcare workforce systems.

C. RFP Documents

RFP documents are available on the NCCCS webpage at the link below.

[Competitive Funding Opportunities \(RFPs\) - NCCCS](#)

The Bridge Pilot RFP packet includes several complementary planning and reference documents intended to help colleges prepare a complete, evidence-informed, and internally consistent application. Each document serves a distinct purpose—from providing a high-level view of the RFP structure to supporting detailed response development, clarifying the characteristics of a strong proposal, and supplying standardized county-level data. Applicants are encouraged to use the documents together throughout the planning process rather than viewing them as separate or stand-alone resources.

00_Bridge Pilot RFP Overview and Guidelines

Provides the primary orientation to the Bridge Pilot funding opportunity and explains the purpose, design framework, application resources, and submission process. The document connects the RFP structure to the broader Bridge model by showing how community and workforce need, pathway design, student supports, institutional capacity, targeted outcomes, and Pilot-to-Implementation fit together. It also summarizes eligibility, funding, key dates, submission expectations, and post-award requirements so colleges can understand the full scope of the opportunity before developing their application.

01_Bridge Pilot RFP Template At-a-Glance

Provides a concise overview of the full Bridge Pilot application structure, including the six RFP sections, major focus areas, and overall organization of the application. It helps applicants quickly understand the RFP structure and how the sections work together before detailed planning begins.

02_Bridge Pilot RFP Planning Template

Serves as the primary working document for developing the application before information is entered into the electronic submission form. It includes the RFP section descriptions, application questions, response guidance, and supporting explanations designed to help colleges organize complete, consistent, and evidence-informed responses. Applicants should use this template to draft and review their full application before final submission. Click here for the link: [RFP Submission Link](#)

03_Bridge Pilot Evaluation Rubric

Provides additional guidance on the characteristics of a strong Bridge proposal. It helps applicants understand the level of clarity, alignment, evidence, feasibility, and integration expected across the application, particularly how community needs, workforce demand, student supports, program design, implementation capacity, and Pilot-to-Implementation should connect. This guide is intended as a planning resource, not a substitute for the RFP questions or application instructions.

04_Bridge Pilot County Data Metrics

Provides standardized county- and regional-level data to support analysis of community and service-area need. Metrics include rurality, Medicaid enrollment, economic conditions, healthcare access, demographics, transportation, childcare, broadband, workforce demand, wages, and other relevant indicators. Applicants should use the data to interpret the local landscape and explain how those conditions influence the proposed student-support strategy, healthcare pathway, and workforce response.

E. Application Process

The Application Process section summarizes the administrative and submission requirements for participating in the Bridge Pilot RFP. It provides applicants with the information needed to confirm eligibility, understand key dates and milestones, plan around the established funding structure, prepare for electronic submission, and anticipate expectations following award. Colleges should review this section early in the planning process to ensure institutional approvals, internal timelines, required materials, and submission responsibilities are addressed well before the application deadline.

1. Eligibility for Funding

The Bridge Pilot funding opportunity is open to **all North Carolina community colleges**. While the Pilot prioritizes serving individuals in rural areas and communities with high Medicaid enrollment, these priorities do not limit eligibility to colleges located exclusively in rural counties or in any specific geographic classification. Applicants are expected to use community, workforce, and healthcare-access information to demonstrate how their proposed project responds to documented need and how the Bridge model will be designed to reach and support the populations identified in their proposal.

To support broad awareness of this funding opportunity, NCCCS will share RFP information through multiple communication channels and stakeholder networks. This outreach is intended to ensure that colleges, Continuing Education and workforce leaders, student-support professionals, institutional leadership, and other relevant campus stakeholders know about the funding opportunity, application requirements, technical assistance resources, and key deadlines.

Colleges are encouraged to involve appropriate cross-functional staff early in the application process, as successful Bridge implementation will require coordination across Continuing Education, student services, fiscal administration, data and institutional research, workforce development, and employer engagement.

2. Important Dates and Milestones

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October 1, 2026	Click the link to join: <u>Information Session: Oct 7 (10:30 - 11:30)</u>	Click the link to join: <u>Office Hours: Oct 27 (3:30 - 4:00)</u> <u>Office Hours: Nov 5 (2:00-2:30)</u>	November 18, 2026 Electronic Submission by 11:59 pm	December 16, 2026

3. NCCCS Contacts

If you have specific questions, please contact any of the contacts below. For general questions, email everyone to ensure a timely response.

Michelle Lair	State Director of Student Success	lairm@nccommunitycolleges.edu
Andrew Gardner	Associate VP of Workforce Strategies	gardnera@nccommunitycolleges.edu
Melissa Smith	Senior State Director, Health Science Programs	smithm@nccommunitycolleges.edu
Barbara Boyce	Workforce Consultant	boyceb_tmp@nccommunitycolleges.edu
Tonya Clark	Public Safety Training Specialist – EMS	clarkt@nccommunitycolleges.edu

4. **The RFP Format**

The RFP includes 17 scored focus areas organized into six sections and totaling 100 points:

Section #	Section Title	Narrative Context	Number of Questions on RFP	Evaluation Max Points
1	Community and Regional Need and Employer Engagement	What problem are we trying to solve?	3	20
2	Program Delivery, Recruitment, and Structured Pathways	What healthcare pathway will respond to that problem?	4	20
3	Bridge Model Implementation	How will the Bridge components strengthen the student experience and address the identified barriers?	3	25
4	Implementation Readiness, Governance, and Data Capacity	Does the college have the people, partnerships, systems, and coordination needed to implement the model?	3	15
5	Use of Funds and Fiscal Readiness	How will Bridge resources be used responsibly to support the proposed strategy?	2	10
6.	Impact, Sustainability, and Replication	What will the college measure, learn, sustain, and contribute to future implementation and replication?	2	10
			Max Points:	100

5. **Budget Allocation**

The budget allocation per college is predetermined. Below is an overview of allowable use of funds and the allocation for each of the three selected colleges.

Use of Funds	Year 1	Year 2	Total
<u>Student Support Funds</u> Up to \$2,000 per student for tuition, fees, and/or wraparound/basic needs support - including housing, transportation, childcare, and other essential expenses - to remove barriers to credential completion.	\$333,333	\$333,333	\$666,667
<u>Success Coaching</u> Part-time success coaches to guide students from enrollment to credential completion.	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$80,000

College Capacity Funding to support essential staffing, such as coordinators, advisors, or part-time personnel, needed to implement, manage, and sustain the pilot effectively, and other interventions as necessary.	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
		\$378,333	\$756,667

Colleges must demonstrate satisfactory Year 1 reporting, implementation progress, and fiscal stewardship as a condition for Year 2 funding disbursement.

6. **Submission Guidelines**

Below are the general submission guidelines:

- Applications must be submitted electronically. Click on the [RFP Submission Link](#) to begin the process. You can also find this link on the NCCCS webpage: [Competitive Funding Opportunities \(RFPs\) - NCCCS](#).
- Applications are due by **11:59 p.m. on November 18, 2026**. Selected colleges will be notified on **December 16, 2026**.
- Applicants should avoid drafting directly in electronic form. Instead, use the planning template as the working document, confirm that all responses are complete and internally consistent, and then enter the approved information into the electronic form.
- Colleges should designate one individual to serve as the Submission Lead. This person should have access to the final approved application, attachments, and appropriate team contacts and should be responsible for entering, reviewing, and submitting the application. Because the form does not allow applicants to save progress and return later, colleges should schedule sufficient uninterrupted time to complete the submission and should not wait until the deadline.
- After submission, the college should retain a complete copy of the final application and confirmation record for future implementation, reporting, and reference. Applicants should also select the option to receive a copy of the submitted responses.

Key Takeaway: Plan in the RFP Planning Template. Review and approve as a team. Submit electronically only when the application is complete and ready for final submission.

7. **Post-Award Expectations – Reporting Requirements**

Selected colleges will participate in a coordinated implementation, reporting, evaluation, and shared-learning framework led by the NC Community College System Office, the North Carolina Community Colleges Foundation, and the Belk Center for Community College Research. Post-award expectations are intended to support accountability, continuous improvement, and development of practical evidence about how the Bridge model performs across participating colleges.

At a minimum, selected colleges will be expected to:

- Maintain a local cross-functional Bridge Implementation Team and use program, fiscal, and student-outcome information to identify barriers, make implementation adjustments, and document lessons learned.
- Submit end-of-semester progress reports documenting student enrollment, persistence, completion, credential attainment, employment outcomes when available, and other required measures.
- Submit quarterly fiscal reports showing expenditures across the three Bridge funding categories: Student Support Funds, Success Coaching, and College Capacity.
- Participate fully in Belk Center evaluation activities, including required data sharing and participation in interviews, focus groups, site visits, surveys, or related evaluation activities.

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- Participate in statewide learning, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing activities designed to strengthen implementation and identify effective practices.
 - Review progress toward the Pilot's targeted 10–15% increase in completion and other key outcomes with the System Office, using findings to inform continuous improvement.
 - Demonstrate satisfactory Year 1 reporting, implementation progress, and fiscal stewardship as a condition for Year 2 funding disbursement.

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College Profile Information

College 3-Digit Code:		College Name:	
Occupational Pathway(s)			

Primary Contact Information

Name	
Title:	
E-Mail Address	
Phone Number:	

Standardized County Data

Using the standardized County Data provided in the RFP packet, please complete the form below.

Primary County Served	
Rural/Urban Classification:	
2026 Economic Tier Designation:	
Other Counties in the Colleges Service Area:	

Medicaid Enrollment Data

Medicaid Enrollment (June 2026)	
County Population (July 1, 2024)	
Medicaid Enrollment Rate	

Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)

Primary Care HPSA Score	
Dental Health HPSA Score	
Mental Health HPSA Score	

County Demographics

Unemployment rate (2023)		Households w/no vehicle (2022)	
Persons in poverty (2023)		Single-parent households w children (2022)	
Median household income (2023)		Housing cost burden (2022)	
Age 65+ (2022)		Population with disability (2022)	
		Households without broadband-enabled computer subscription (2022)	

Attestation

This application does not require original signatures. For submission purposes, applicable staff should read and attest to the following statement by entering a "Yes" in the appropriate box. This RFP has been discussed and/or reviewed for submission to the NCCCS System Office.

Name	Title	Response
	College President	
	Chief Financial Officer	
	Senior Program Administrator	