



# Press Release

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## **\$25 Million Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative Grant Secured for the Region**

First Tennessee Development District (FTDD) Foundation is the recipient of a \$25 million, three-year Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative Grant from the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS).

“The impact of this grant will be felt in every corner of Northeast Tennessee by serving 1,000 families in need over the next 1,000 days,” said Mayor Joe Grandy, who also serves as Chairman of the FTDD Board of Directors. “FTDD is fulfilling its long-standing mission to increase economic opportunity through collaboration. I speak for every board member of Development District when we express our thanks to the State of Tennessee and the Department of Human Services for the faith they have placed in our region, and for providing the resources to alleviate poverty and overcome barriers to opportunity.”

The grant application was the result of a cooperative effort of many regional groups, with STRONG Accountable Care Community (ACC) serving as a backbone. The funding will enable STRONG ACC to launch STRONG Families, a pilot program that will use a multi-pronged approach to increase economic mobility, self-sufficiency and well-being for low-income families in Northeast Tennessee.

Goals for the program include keeping families with children living in their own homes or the homes of relatives, as well as ending the dependence of low-income parents on government benefits through workforce training.

TDHS considered applicants across the state for the Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative (TOPI) grant program, and the application created by STRONG ACC was one of only seven grants awarded statewide. FTDD will serve as the fiscal agent for the grant. Other grant partners are Ballad Health, MAYA Consulting and East Tennessee State University’s Center for Rural Health Research.

As STRONG Families Northeast Tennessee takes shape, partners such as Frontier Health, Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency, Tennessee Voices and the YWCA of Northeast Tennessee will add crucial support to ensure the success of the new, poverty-centered initiative.

“Through this initiative, 1,000 families, and an estimated 1,800 children, will have access to behavioral health services, direct financial investment and a family partner to help guide families out of poverty,” Grandy said. “The approach of providing a family partner will serve as a bridge between families and resources.”

Family partners will be trained in peer support methods and will be a cultural match for the families they serve, either through a lived experience of poverty or experience working with low-income individuals.

Families participating in the program will have access to a direct cash investment through their engagement in the UpTogether Community Platform. Behavioral health services will also be free for those participating in the program, offering another resource to help pull families toward economic vitality.

***About STRONG ACC***

*STRONG stands for Striving Toward Resiliency and Opportunity for the Next Generation. Established in 2018, the STRONG Accountable Care Community is a multi-sector, collective impact coalition comprised of more than 325 organizations committed to early childhood development, educational success, economic vitality, and health and wellbeing in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. The STRONG ACC is governed by a 24-member Leadership Council comprised of a broad cross-section of regional leaders in healthcare, human services, education and business. To learn more, please visit <https://www.strongacc.org/>.*

***About First Tennessee Development District***

*The First Tennessee Development District was formed in 1966 as a result of legislation passed by the Tennessee General Assembly. The First Tennessee Development District is one of nine regional organizations in the state that carries out general and comprehensive planning and development activities for local governments. The mayors from the eight counties and twenty municipalities that comprise the District, as well as industrial and legislative representatives, serve on the board of directors and provide direction to the staff as they serve the region through planning, coordination and technical assistance.*