

NEWS

U.S Department of Energy awards Tennessee Tech \$4 million for green economy proposal

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Tennessee Tech has been awarded more than \$4 million by the U.S. Department of Energy for its proposal to build the clean energy economy in rural areas.

The project title is "Rural Reimagined: Building an EV Ecosystem and Green Economy for Transforming Lives in Economically Distressed Appalachia." Rural Reimagined is Tennessee Tech's Grand Challenge initiative to harness science, technology and innovation to transform rural communities.

"Today is a great day," said Pinggen Chen, assistant professor for mechanical engineering at Tennessee Tech. "With the rise of the clean energy economy around electric vehicles, rural and low-income communities in Appalachia have struggled in the transition, due in part to a lack of infrastructure, low awareness and limited-to-no access to electric vehicles and clean energy jobs."

The total cost of the project is \$8 million. Tennessee Tech is the leading organization among more than 50 partners from Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia sharing the balance of the funding. Chen is the principal investigator of the project.

"This project aims to provide clean and affordable mobility options to the underserved communities by developing needed charging infrastructure and adopting and demonstrating various cost-effective electric vehicles in diverse applications," said Chen. "In addition, the project aims to create outreach, training and education opportunities to the residents of rural and low-income communities."

Five major components make up the project; charging infrastructure development, electric vehicle acquisition and demonstration, data collection and analysis, outreach and education and workforce training and economic development. The proposal says long term impacts on

rural areas would include transition from a fossil fuel-based fuel economy to clean energy, improved environmental quality and public health as well as creating new job opportunities.

“This will facilitate collaborative opportunities between universities, automotive electric vehicle manufacturers, charging station suppliers and other stakeholders on workforce training to serve the rapidly growing electric vehicle industry and clean energy economy,” said Chen. “The goal is to build the underpinnings of a green economy in the most economically distressed Appalachian region to transform the lives of rural and low-income communities.”

Vice President Kamala Harris and U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer M. Granholm recently announced a total of 25 projects across the nation awarded a total of \$199 million. The focus is research, development and demonstration projects to advance electrification of freight trucks, reduce vehicle emissions and improve the electric charging infrastructure.

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