

*Finding the Workforce Development ‘Silver Bullet’
Health Enterprise Network
2016 Healthcare Fellows Class*

Background

The 2016 Health Enterprise Network (HEN) Fellows class was tasked with trying to find a “silver bullet” to workforce development in healthcare. Through our independent research, and consultations with various leaders in the local community (see Exhibit 1), we found there to be no single “silver bullet”. We have, however, identified several themes through our conversations and research, and we are suggesting that HEN consider executing the action items proposed below to better facilitate workforce development efforts within the healthcare community.

Themes Identified

#1. Education is critical. When it comes to attracting talent and retaining it, one of the biggest barriers identified was our challenged public education system. Further, it is difficult to attract high-wage jobs if we do not have a high-skilled workforce.

- *We need to start earlier.* It is important to get young people started on a career pathway as early as possible (i.e., 7th and 8th grade). Even obtaining entry level credentials (e.g., CNAs, phlebotomists, etc.) in high school can help non-college-bound students move up their career ladders. Educators noted that credits earned by students in high school or at two-year colleges should be translatable toward four-year baccalaureate degrees (e.g., Murray State’s reverse transfer agreement with five regional community colleges).
- *We need to develop more “earn and learn” models.* We found that one critical key to workforce development is gaining ‘hands on’ work experience, either through an internship in their selected career field or through an apprenticeship program. One example from the manufacturing sector is KY FAME, which applies a dual-track, apprenticeship-style training to create a pipeline of highly skilled workers.
- *We need to rethink the way we train nurses.* Our training focus must shift to wellness. And how can we push LPNs to become RNs? RNs to become BSNs?
- *We cannot rely on tuition reimbursement programs.* Asking employers to increase tuition reimbursement, while helpful, will not be enough to push employees to pursue advanced certifications or degrees. And tuition reimbursement programs would be among the first programs to be reduced if the economic climate worsens.

#2. Obtaining better data is a must. Kentucky must improve its state-level data systems for tracking the supply and distribution of health professionals and it must share that data with the Kentucky regulatory bodies that license health professional and the institutions that train them. A “gold standard” here is North Carolina’s Health Professions Data System, which was developed by the Sheps Center at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to collect and disseminate timely and reliable data on selected licensed health professionals in North Carolina. See <http://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/hp/index.html> for more details. Similar data focusing on Kentucky’s licensed health professionals would help identify anticipated shortages and geographic needs. With better data, we can more appropriately invest workforce development resources in the most critical areas.

#3. Limited resources are a hindrance. Limited or scarce resources to fill certain positions within healthcare is not a new topic of discussion. However, developing a ‘pipeline’ by growing jobs organically and forming partnerships could be essential to solving this problem.

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- *We need to focus on growing jobs organically* – Rather than offering tax incentives and cash to relocating companies, it may be cheaper and easier to grow jobs in Kentucky organically.
- *Partnerships can be key* – Public and private partnerships, like those being started with Trilogy Healthcare and local schools in the community to provide training and funding to those interested in a nursing career, but maybe could not afford it, could be crucial to breaking through resource barriers.

Suggested Actions

The identified themes are expansive. Pragmatically, HEN can only do so much. We believe the following actions would positively impact existing community workforce development efforts:

Become a liaison between HEN’s members and community workforce development initiatives: As we have learned, our community’s workforce development efforts are stratified. HEN can help guide its members to the appropriate community resources. In addition, HEN should strengthen its connections with the Workforce Development Cabinet and the Workforce Innovation Board.

Engage future HEN Fellows classes in further study and effort to define workforce development: Future HEN Fellows can engage in further study of these issues to determine the best models for enhancing workforce development, as well as working to fully define workforce development and finding areas where HEN could focus its efforts. For example, future Fellows could visit St. Claire Regional Medical Center, in Morehead, Kentucky, which is working with two regional Workforce Development Boards to address its workforce (i.e., nursing) needs. Why is St. Claire experiencing benefits from its efforts? Are there any other examples to study (e.g., Passport Health Plan’s strategic relationship with Evolent Health)? Fellows can identify organizations that are taking innovative approaches to workforce development and analyze whether those approaches can be applied more broadly. This suggestion would be a way for the HEN Board to get more in depth research on various topics and issues associated with workforce development.

Encourage HEN members to develop and deepen relationships with educational organizations: We applaud the many HEN members that already partner with community educators. HEN should encourage members to engage earlier – in middle schools rather than high schools – and more deeply – creating “earn and learn” models like those promoted by KY FAME. If employers want highly-skilled employees, then they should help develop the educational programs to produce the output they seek. These programs would create natural pathways for job seekers into the businesses represented within HEN’s network.

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Exhibit 1 – Listing of individuals consulted with on Workforce Development

- **Hal Heiner**, Secretary of Kentucky’s Education and Workforce Development Cabinet;
- **Melissa Aguilar**, Executive Director of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, an advisory board to the Governor on workforce training and development issues;
- **Dr. Ty Handy**, President of Jefferson Community and Technical College, part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System;
- **Keisha Deonarine**, Economic Development Manager for the Louisville Metro Department of Economic Development, who serves as the cluster manager of the Life-Long Wellness and Aging Care Strategy;
- **Dr. Nora Warshawsky** (PhD, RN, CNE), co-chair of the Kentucky Center for Nursing and an Associate Professor at the University of Kentucky’s College of Nursing;
- **Dr. Todd Schmiedler**, Senior Vice President, Employment Services and Foundation, Trilogy Health Services;
- **Dr. Mark Wiegand** (PT, PhD), Dean of the Lansing School of Nursing and Health Sciences, Bellarmine University;
- **Sam Smith**, President at Click IT Staffing;
- **Ted Smith**, former Chief of Civic Innovation for Louisville; and
- **Jan Gordon**, Executive Director of Spencerian College.