

Guide to Investing in Frontline Health Care Workers



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EMPLOYER BEST PRACTICES FOR MAKING EFFECTIVE INVESTMENTS IN FRONTLINE WORKERS

There is no “one size fits all” model for health care providers to effectively invest in their frontline workforce, but there are both programmatic and organizational practices common to the most successful employer-based programs. Fundamentally, “best practice” employers—including CareerSTAT’s Frontline Health Care Worker Champions—view their frontline employees as critical assets that increase business impact and improve quality of care.

They are learning organizations that 1) invest in programs to make education and advancement a priority for employees at all levels, and 2) maintain organizational structures, policies, and leadership support to realize the highest level of impact from their investments. This document features CareerSTAT Champion organizations that employ a combination of programmatic and organizational best practices. Specific examples are provided to illustrate how each practice is implemented.

CareerSTAT

CareerSTAT is a network of health care leaders investing in the skills and careers of frontline workers. CareerSTAT's Frontline Health Care Worker Champion program recognizes organizations making significant investments in their frontline employees. The programs and policies of these 25 Champions and Emerging Champions have informed the findings and recommendations of this Guide.

Who Are Frontline Health Care Workers?

Frontline health care workers provide routine and essential services in all settings, including hospitals, outpatient care, behavioral health, long term care and home health care. They represent 50% of the health care workforce and are responsible for a range of operations, including providing administrative, direct care, environmental, and technical services to patients, families, and caregivers. CareerSTAT focuses on those frontline positions that require less than a bachelor's degree and generally earn median incomes less than \$45,000 per year. For a full list of frontline occupations visit <http://www.nationalfund.org/initiatives/careerstat/who-are-frontline-workers/>.

Programmatic Best Practices

Programmatic best practices engage frontline workers directly in many forms of workforce training and education to expand talent pipelines and make learning and career advancement easily accessible.

1. Inclusive Hiring	2. Accessible Learning	3. Career Advancement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit from the community Create an incumbent worker pipeline Provide structured onboarding of new hires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic skills development Work-based learning Competency-based instruction Flexible learning options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced training to meet new performance standards Career exploration tools and opportunities Career coaching and counseling Career pathways

Organizational Best Practices

At the highest level, organizational best practices ensure that the necessary infrastructure and support are in place so that workforce training and education programs have the greatest impact on both the business and individual workers.

1. Engaging Leaders	2. Developing Infrastructure	3. Leveraging Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with organizational priorities Senior leader support and sponsorship Managers as coaches and champions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated workforce units or staff Employee skill and educational assessments Supportive HR policies Workforce planning and analytics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure seed funding and develop co-investment strategies Form industry partnerships with other employers Leverage partner expertise and resources Integrate with business operations

While not every employer can adopt all of these practices, CareerSTAT offers a framework for selecting practices that will ensure effective investments that develop frontline worker skills and have an impact on important business metrics. Employers can select practices based on organizational needs and capabilities, recognizing that a combination of both programmatic and structural practices is necessary.



Programmatic Best Practices

Inclusive Hiring

Inclusive hiring involves a set of practices that gives local community members and incumbent workers an opportunity to grow their careers in health care and provides employers with an expanded pipeline to fill high-demand positions. Employers frequently partner with community-based organizations or workforce intermediaries to implement inclusive hiring practices to improve the success of these programs and decrease turnover of entry-level workers.

Recruit from the Community

Health care employers, particularly urban hospitals, are intentionally recruiting and hiring individuals from the communities in which their patients and families live in order to offer opportunities to residents, increase workforce diversity, and demonstrate local investment. Extending workforce programs into underserved communities through recruitment and pre-employment training helps health care employers build a broader pipeline for frontline positions.

► **University Hospitals** is an anchor institution in Cleveland committed to hiring from their local community. In their “Step Up to UH” program, HR works closely with community-based partners to recruit residents from low-income, high-unemployment neighborhoods surrounding the main campus of the hospital system. After initial screening, candidates attend a two-week pre-employment course offered by Towards Employment, a local community based organization, in customer service, interview skills, and training to help them secure a job. Those who interview successfully are hired for positions in environmental services or nutrition services—often backfilling for UH frontline workers who have advanced through training into higher-level roles. Towards Employment provides new hires with job coaching to aid retention. Step Up to UH boasts a 95 percent 90-day retention rate and an 80 percent one-year retention rate.

Create an Incumbent Worker Pipeline

Recruiting and hiring incumbent workers into high-demand occupations offers employers a pipeline of employees that already meet important organizational hiring criteria: they are a cultural fit and have a strong performance track record.

- ▶ **Jersey City Medical Center**, an affiliate of RWJBarnabas Health in New Jersey, looked to its incumbent workers in environmental services, patient access, security, and patient transport to help the organization address key staffing shortage areas. Individuals were trained and promoted into higher-skilled, higher-paying occupations such as patient care technicians, medical assistants, billing coordinators, and emergency medical technicians. Experienced JCMC staff mentored students during the training course, and all experiential learning occurred onsite. Instructors collaborated with local and county human service agencies to provide wraparound support and referrals to services as needed. With financial support from Newark Alliance, JCMC has run three cycles of training in these occupations, with close to 100 percent retention. In addition to increasing employee engagement, the incumbent worker pipeline has filled high-demand positions yielding significant savings compared to the recruitment and onboarding costs of about \$5,600 per new hire. According to JCMC's Manager of Employment, Training and Development, Lourdes Valdes, "These employees have already been interviewed, prescreened, educated, and had their competencies assessed. They are knowledgeable about the customer service expectations, familiar with the facility. It is most efficient and effective to provide the opportunity to an internal, self-motivated, employee."¹

"It is most efficient and effective to provide the opportunity to an internal, self-motivated employee."

Structured Onboarding of New Hires

Frontline workers' success in transitioning to a new position and their experience during the first 90 days of employment is critical to retention and requires a structured onboarding process that includes orientation, assessment, training, and mentoring. For workers transitioning directly from unemployment or a non-clinical environment, support mechanisms are essential to ground new hires in the systems and workplace professionalism of the organization and their unit, as well as in job tasks and expectations.

- ▶ The home care industry is plagued by high turnover, but **Homebridge**, a nonprofit home care agency in the San Francisco Bay Area, invests heavily in the onboarding of its new entry-level personal caregivers, and it sees results. In addition to intensive paid training, new home care providers are engaged in work readiness workshops, barriers assessments, and cultural onboardings followed by months of supported one-on-one coaching and mentoring. Career ladders are built into the support model to ensure that home care providers have an opportunity to rise within—and outside of—Homebridge. Training instruction is conducted in three languages—English, Spanish, and Cantonese—using a competency-based curriculum designed for adults with a minimum sixth-grade reading proficiency. Each skill and knowledge area is tested with formalized assessments to ensure mastery before new employees begin working with clients. Homebridge is also providing every home care provider with uniform scrubs that will increase safety and professional respect and promote team unity and professional pride. Every home care provider is also being equipped with an iPhone and trained on using the technology to access client care plans and clock in and out of shifts electronically. With these comprehensive initiatives, Homebridge had a 23.8 percent annualized turnover rate in 2015 as compared to the 61 percent national average.

Accessible Learning

Making learning accessible to incumbent frontline workers frequently allows them to attend programs that develop new skills and knowledge while simultaneously maintaining their work schedules and salaries. Employers use different delivery methods to expand program access and increase the likelihood of successful program completion. These practices demonstrate a high level of organizational commitment to developing the talent of entry-level workers in a manner that is both good for employees and good for business.

Basic Skills Development

Offering basic skills instruction in the workplace helps to remove barriers to advancement for entry-level frontline workers, particularly when coursework is contextualized in the health care setting. Taking academic readiness courses in English language, reading comprehension, and math or other foundational skills is often the first step toward enrolling in more advanced courses, participating in a job training program, or completing a high school diploma.

► **LifeBridge Health** is one of the largest and most comprehensive providers of health services to the people of Northwest Baltimore. Encompassing four hospitals and one long-term care facility, LifeBridge targets frontline employees earning less than \$15 an hour. They offer a suite of no-cost programs and services to assist individuals to develop the necessary skills needed for career and academic success. From one-day computer courses to math and English courses modeled after college developmental education classes, LifeBridge offers courses in a variety of formats to meet employee needs. For example, School at Work® is a blended-learning basic skills program contextualized for health care that combines online learning with onsite instruction. Two life skills and career coaches are central to LifeBridge's strategy to help employees succeed in achieving their personal

and professional goals. As health care delivery evolves and the model for community engagement expands, LifeBridge continues to refine its workforce development strategies for low-wage employees as well as for community members. Fundamentally, LifeBridge leaders believe that investing in people's skills and careers has a positive impact in the communities they serve.

Work-Based Learning

Innovative employers are utilizing different types of structured work-based learning practices to promote skill mastery and to expand their talent pipelines. Work-based learning involves activities that occur in the workplace that allow individuals to gain the knowledge, skills, and experience needed for entry or advancement.² "Earn and learn" models such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training offer individuals an opportunity to be paid while they master skills and gain hands-on experience.

► **Penn Medicine** is a Philadelphia-based health system serving the community through its network of hospitals, clinical care providers, and the nation's first school of medicine. Penn's Patient Service Excellence Academy provides on-the-job training using an apprenticeship model to meet its growing demand for patient service representatives. The Academy recruits individuals from retail and service settings with a strong commitment to customer service who may not have access to jobs at Penn Medicine because they lack health care experience. Recruits are placed in a five-week immersive on-the-job training program that focuses on bridging the technical portion of the role and the service component. The goal is to develop the most understanding and compassionate individuals to work in Penn Medicine's clinical practices. Since 2012, Penn Medicine has trained and placed 105 participants as patient service representatives in its clinical practices. Additionally, Penn Medicine launched a similar academy program for its customer service access center. Two cohorts have successfully completed the program.

Competency-Based Instruction

Competency-based education is a form of instruction that focuses on student mastery of skills rather than on “seat time” in the classroom. Competency-based instruction is particularly valuable for learning in the workplace context, because it clearly defines skills and knowledge tied directly to careers. The learning is self-paced, programs are personalized to meet individual needs, and advancement is tied to mastery of competencies, not to credits or grades.

- ▶ The Workforce Development team at Boston-based **Partners HealthCare** recognizes the value of competency-based education for its frontline workers, particularly those in nonclinical positions who aspire to complete a post-secondary degree. In partnership with College for America of Southern New Hampshire University, Partners offers employees across its integrated system the option of low-cost, online, self-paced, competency-based associate’s and bachelor’s degree programs in health care management. All work at CfA comes in the form of contextualized project-based learning, which enables students to immediately integrate the competencies they are developing and apply them in a real-world setting. To ensure success in online learning, employees are required to complete an Online College Preparation Program, developed by Partners in collaboration with online learning experts. This program, offered free to employees of Partners and its member institutions, helps participants acclimate to online course delivery. Using a simulated web-based learning environment and multimedia, interactive presentations, the program provides an introduction to online learning as well as an opportunity to develop online learning skills through short courses in time management and study skills. Close to 600 employees have completed the college preparation program and over 300 employees are enrolled in CfA programs.

Flexible Learning Options

As part of their efforts to make the workplace “learning friendly,” health care employers work with educational partners to provide flexible learning models that better accommodate working adults. Onsite, online, and accelerated learning options are all available.

- ▶ **East Boston Neighborhood Health Center** has taken extraordinary steps to provide workers with the opportunity to train for new, more-advanced positions without having to leave the worksite. In 2006, the center established the onsite Education and Training Institute and then became the official East Boston satellite campus for Bunker Hill Community College. Staff and residents from the surrounding communities have access to college-level courses, including a three-credit medical interpreting program that results in a wage increase for bilingual entry-level workers. Providing onsite learning options has resulted in more than one-third of EBNHC’s frontline workers participating in training and professional development programs. A 2015 recipient of the *Boston Globe*’s “Top Places to Work” designation, EBNHC’s investment in training and education has enabled its frontline workers to increase their wages and improve their skills while at the same time making primary care more accessible to those living in the communities it serves.

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Career Advancement

Individuals seeking jobs in health care often see frontline positions as their first step toward a higher-level, higher-paying position. Yet the low wages and high hurdles to advancement, including unclear pathways to licensed positions and lack of support for enhanced training, are major spurs to worker turnover and related employer costs. Employers who champion career advancement provide access to tools, resources, and opportunities needed to make advancement a reality.

Enhanced Training to Meet New Performance Standards

Health care workers at all levels must meet higher performance expectations in today's Affordable Care Act environment, and frontline workers are no exception. And as the demand for caregiving shifts from acute care to outpatient settings, workers may need to retool their skills.

▶ **The League of Voluntary Hospitals and Homes of New York** is the employer association partner in the nation's oldest and largest health care industry partnership, the 1199SEIU League Training and Upgrading Fund. As a labor-management partnership, the fund provides training and education to meet the League employers' and industry needs. Over 100 nonprofit medical centers, hospitals, and nursing homes in the greater New York metropolitan area contribute approximately \$23 million per year to the fund, which is used for an array of training and education programs and for upgrading benefits. These resources give employees the time, financial resources, and support needed to gain new skills and credentials as well as multiple options for securing new or advanced positions. The League, through the Training Fund, offers high school completion programs, workplace skills and skills enhancement trainings, college preparatory courses, English as a Second Language courses, and computer literacy, among others. The fund implements known best practices for workers'

success, such as cohort-based programs of study and courses, worker/employer-friendly course scheduling (evening and weekend college and online programs), case management, tutoring, career counseling, academic advisement, and child care services in some sites. Upon completion, the fund provides licensure and certification preparation courses, and continuing education and professional development seminars.

In 2015, more than 6,000 workers enrolled in programs that lead directly to career advancement and wage increases, while enabling the League's employers to deliver high-quality primary care.

Career Exploration Tools and Opportunities

Transparency—making possible career paths, and the actions and educational preparation required for each step, visible and comprehensible to all employees—is central to helping employees advance. Employers use a myriad of tools to aid staff in understanding different paths and options available, including career maps, individual education plans, job shadowing, and teaching “job research” techniques that include studying job descriptions, networking with managers, and monitoring current position openings.

▶ To illustrate the different types of jobs found in post-acute care facilities, **Genesis HealthCare** created a career map that outlines the education and training requirements for different positions and career pathway options. Developed in collaboration with the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare, “Mapping Your Future, a Guide to Career Growth in Long-Term Care,” is used by incumbent workers at Genesis, high school students interested in pursuing a career in post-acute care or nursing, and at one-stop career centers around the Baltimore region.

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Career Counseling and Coaching

Career counseling and coaching—to assess workers’ interests, guide their choices, and address their personal and academic challenges—are essential to supporting worker advancement. Career coaches use labor market information and online resources to expose frontline workers to possible pathways and help them think about how to navigate them.

- ▶ At Baltimore’s **MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital**, the coach is an RN and education specialist who supports frontline workers’ interest in transitioning into new jobs. The role of the coach is to help workers identify short- and long-term career goals, create an individual career development plan, and help them navigate continuing education to earn new credentials and move into new jobs that will improve their economic status. Resume development and help with interviewing skills are also important services offered. Career coaches consult with workers on how to perform their jobs better and help them identify barriers to performance and resources to overcome these barriers. Taking a holistic approach, coaches can help workers balance life, work, and school obligations, and assist with finding child care, transportation, or emergency funds to cover rent, utilities, or other expenses. Jeffrey Matton, a former president of MedStar, observes, “the role of coach is very important for the success of our pipeline programs. For entry-level staff, this is often the first time anyone has ever helped them to create a career development plan. It is the first time many have considered attending college, getting a certificate, or entering a real career path. In return we have employees who are committed to our hospital and our community.”³

Career Pathways

Career pathways offer frontline workers options for advancement on the job, including career moves within or between job families and occupations. While opportunities for job growth in clinical and non-clinical areas can be more common in large health care employers such as hospitals and integrated health systems, pathways do exist in long-term care, home health, and primary care. Employers from across the continuum of care are working together with community colleges and community-based organizations to create career pathway programs that include comprehensive supports to facilitate academic success.

- ▶ The employer-led Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati organized five hospitals/health systems, including **TriHealth, Inc.**, and three community colleges, to provide training and wraparound supports to prepare incumbent workers for careers in nursing, allied health, rehabilitation, clinical lab, and health information technology. The career pathway program uses a cohort model to facilitate peer support and persistence. Employers provide tuition prepayment, funding for developmental education if necessary, flexible work hours to attend classes, supportive services to assist with transportation and child care, and job coaching. The community colleges offer academic advising, convenient class locations and schedules for working students, innovative curricula, and transferable credits and articulation agreements between institutions. Through 2015, more than 2,156 incumbent workers have participated in career pathways training.



Organizational Best Practices

Engaging Leadership

Frontline workforce initiatives succeed when leadership at all levels—chief executives, department heads, managers, and supervisors of frontline workers—support organizational investments in frontline workers. Having champions who understand and tout program benefits to other leaders helps to secure financial backing and commitment throughout the organization. And above all, strong leadership support binds workforce investment to organizational priorities and goals.

Alignment with Organizational Priorities and Goals

To fully engage health care executives in frontline workforce development—and ensure that initiatives become “part of the way we do business” rather than one-time programs—the investments must reflect core organizational priorities.

- ▶ Based in Shreveport, LA, **Holy Angels** serves approximately 200 individuals of varying ages with a range of intellectual and developmental disabilities. As an independent nonprofit, Holy Angels employs around 300 staff who focus on community integration through residential services and job coaching. Holy Angels makes frontline worker investment a major organizational priority to ensure that its direct service workers are equipped to provide the highest quality of care to clients. According to CEO Laurie Boswell, “over the years it has become painfully clear that many of the workers upon whose dedication, compassion, and professionalism we so greatly rely also need assistance maximizing their own human potential. Further, we believe that by helping workers to learn while they earn, we gain a more loyal long-term workforce that is increasingly able to support improvement to the continuum of care

we are known for.”⁴ In 2012, Holy Angels joined a collaboration with local education and workforce partners to establish Angel University. By offering multiple on-site training courses in Certified Medication Administration and foundational and life skills, and paying employees who participate in them, Holy Angels has seen a return on its investments. Holy Angels lowered staff turnover while securing a consistent retention rate of 82 percent for those who received certification in medication administration. In addition, 29 percent of Holy Angels’ employees received a pay increase from training.

Senior Leader Support and Sponsorship

Senior leaders such as chief human resource officers, vice presidents, or facility administrators often serve as champions, both internally and to the larger health care and workforce professional community.

- ▶ Pacesetters in this role include executives at Boston’s **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center**, who established workforce functions and successfully made the case to their institutions for sustained organizational support. BIDMC’s SVP of Human Resources was an early champion of workforce programming and capacity, overseeing the creation of the Workforce Development Director position. The hospital’s President/CEO and Chief Operating Officer were also strong proponents who regularly spoke at program events. They both recognized that investing in internal employee training and development programs is a cost-effective strategy that helps retain staff and fill critical positions. To cultivate mid-level champions, the workforce development team consults department directors and managers in areas such

as Pharmacy or Perioperative Services to determine their business needs and develop workforce solutions. These mid-level leaders supported frontline training and education programs when they experienced how well BIDMC’s internal pipeline programs addressed shortages or high turnover in key clinical and administrative positions at the hospital. Fundamentally, BIDMC is engaged in this work because its leaders believe in investing in its employees and because it makes good business sense.

Managers as Coaches and Champions

Frontline supervisors or managers play a pivotal role in the career development of incumbent frontline workers. As coaches or mentors, managers support their staff by encouraging them to grow their skills and consider steps to advance their careers. As champions, they recommend employees for training programs and grant release from work duties to participate in training. Supportive supervisors make schedule adjustments for frontline trainees and help backfill to cover their time off the unit.

- ▶ Leaders at **UnityPoint Health** in Des Moines, IA, believe in their motto, “Come for a job, stay for a career.” According to Joyce McDanel, VP of HR, in 2015, 92 percent of supervisor positions were filled by incumbent workers, but this was not always the case.⁵ When UnityPoint Health, along with other regional health care employers, realized it was losing frontline workers due to lack of quality supervisors and the absence of a structured program to develop new leaders, it developed “Breakthrough to Leadership” to address this challenge. The program fills supervisory roles with internal candidates seeking career advancement opportunities and

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higher wages. Candidates with leadership potential are nominated by their supervising director as well as by peers. Once in the program, they attend classes with colleagues from a variety of departments and entities, meet with senior leaders, and receive training that increases the effectiveness of their communication and problem-solving skills.⁶ Since its inception in 2014, 67 UnityPoint Health–Des Moines employees have entered the program and 34 have received promotions. As new managers or supervisors, they have the opportunity to coach and champion advancement of other frontline workers, as their supervisors did for them.

Developing Infrastructure

While engaged leadership is critical to promoting workforce investment, it is just as important to build policies, systems, and structures to support skill and career development. And these capacities can help sustain workforce programs when an executive champion departs the organization.

Dedicated Workforce Development Units or Staff

Larger health care employers, especially hospitals and health systems, have established dedicated units or positions devoted to frontline workforce development, as distinct from traditional human resource or staff education departments. Such capacity, whether in a dedicated workforce director or in existing staff education units, is critical if frontline worker development is to remain an organizational priority.

- ▶ Over the past 21 years, **Fairview Health Services** in Minnesota has developed a deep infrastructure and longstanding support for workforce development programs. The Workforce Development-Talent Acquisition Department employs nine staff who offer an array of workforce development and career pathway services to all employees, students and community residents, from entry level through professional graduate degree programs. This department allows Fairview to devote full-time attention to program success: assessing needs, building relationships with educational partners

and community based organizations, and adapting workforce activities to changing labor demands. With an average of 1200 openings at any given time, Fairview has created an infrastructure that will help to secure 80% of its future employees through its student and community workforce program.

Employee Skill and Educational Assessments

Effectively coaching frontline workers often depends on assessing their skill levels, college readiness, and career interests in a systematic manner.

- ▶ Through the Employee Career Initiative at **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center** in Boston, BIDMC career coaches have a portfolio of assessment tools they administer onsite to workers interested in skill development and career advancement. Some of the tools include the TABE (Test for Adult Basic Education), ACCUPLACER (placement test for community college enrollment) test, personal interviews and self-assessment worksheets to understand an employee's interests, skills and values. After these assessments are completed, the career coach will help to develop individualized education roadmaps, or learning plans that include areas for skill development, occupational targets, and the coursework necessary to meet them. In FY15, over 550 BIDMC employees received an ECI service, including onsite academic assessment and career or academic counseling. Overall, 245 ECI participants have entered pipeline training programs at BIDMC or programs offered at local educational institutions.

Supportive HR Policies

Effective development of frontline workers requires more than a single program or initiative. It requires organizational policy that makes support for investing in skills and career advancement routine and sustained over time. Examples of supportive HR policies and employee benefits include tuition assistance, structured onboarding requirements, systematic competency assessment, and full or partial paid release time for education and training.

▶ A practice in good currency among many employers, including **UnityPoint Health**, is the payment of tuition costs in advance. While tuition assistance is often available to health care workers, it is commonly provided in the form of reimbursement, requiring initial out-of-pocket outlays that may be too costly for low-wage employees. UnityPoint also expanded its tuition assistance program to cover certificate-based training that wasn't previously covered. Training is offered on site whenever possible, and employees are allowed to stay on the clock and get paid during training time. UnityPoint's retention specialist helps frontline staff take advantage of the organization's range of educational and career development services offered as employee benefits. UnityPoint's economic incentive to maintain supportive HR policies and employee benefits is strong: high turnover in entry-level, non-licensed positions costs millions of dollars annually in recruitment, orientation, and training and leads to reduced continuity of care for those with direct patient contact.

Workforce Planning and Analytics

Making the business case for supportive workforce practices requires both quantitative and qualitative data. It also requires the capacity for data collection and analysis in order to support programmatic decision-making and the forecasting of talent development needs.

▶ **Norton Healthcare** in Louisville, KY, has established workforce planning and analytical processes that use data to determine strategic direction. Norton has staff and systems to collect and manage data in order to track programs, assess impacts, and analyze future needs. Central to its methods is a forecasting tool that aggregates data on specific occupational groups such as head count, turnover rates, recruitment metrics—including time to fill positions—vacancy rates, employee engagement, and required skills. The forecasting tool provides insights on where to target workforce programs. For example, the analysts determined that a majority of

Norton's medical technologists would be retiring. This finding, along with additional HR and service area data, helped make the case for an allied health career ladder for medical lab technicians and technologists. Similar analysis uncovered needs for developing talent in sterile processing and other operating room technicians, as well as health information technology occupations.

Leveraging Resources

Employers that make lasting investments in their frontline workers have mastered the art of leveraging resources from a variety of sources to start, scale, and sustain programs and infrastructure. Co-investment with philanthropy, other employers, unions, community-based organizations and government is the key to transitioning from temporary program-based funding for frontline worker development to more sustained funding of infrastructure supported by an organization's operational budget.

Secure Seed Funding and Develop Co-Investment Strategies

Often, seed capital provided by public grants and philanthropic investments brings employers and other stakeholders together to create workforce development programs. Outside support has enabled health care workforce investments to become both more intensive, by providing a deeper level of services and career opportunities for incumbent workers, and more extensive, by expanding the pool of employees or community members supported and the range of occupations engaged. Such support might come from a local United Way affiliate, a community or corporate foundation, a funders collaborative, or a state or federal workforce development grant program. After an initial period of grant funding, many employers have gradually assumed some or all of the costs of frontline workforce programs.

► In 2004, Baltimore’s **Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System** established its initial frontline workforce initiative, Project REACH (Resources and Education for the Advancement of Careers at Hopkins), with U.S. Department of Labor grant funds. The program was an 18-month incumbent worker acceleration grant designed to develop employees’ skills and knowledge in order to fill vacant positions and meet urgent skills shortages. Over time, Project REACH has become a part of the organization’s strategic plan, is sustained by 100 percent institutional support from JHHS, and now includes five workforce development initiatives that provide comprehensive support for frontline workers’ academic and professional advancement.

Form Industry Partnerships with Other Employers

Health care workforce partnerships are dynamic collaborations of regional employers who convene regularly with the assistance of a workforce intermediary to discuss shared human resources issues, exchange labor market information, and take specific actions to address workforce challenges. Education and training providers, community-based organizations, unions, and the workforce development system (including one-stop career centers) are often actively engaged with employers in developing and implementing collaborative solutions to solve current and projected workforce needs.

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► **Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH)** works with health care providers, educational institutions, and local agencies to prepare residents of Baltimore with the skills and education needed to address the critical shortage of qualified health care workers in the region. Since its creation in 2005, BACH has achieved significant scale, serving over 1,000 workers and seven major health care system employers while building programs and partnership models for other regions to emulate. BACH also contributes to the salaries of career coaches in some hospitals in an effort to improve retention and advancement of entry-level workers, and it supports employees who need academic preparation prior to enrolling in postsecondary allied health programs.

Leverage Partner Expertise and Resources

Employers do not need to develop and maintain expertise in all aspects of workforce development to effectively support their frontline workers. Drawing on the strengths of partner organizations is an effective use of resources and demonstrates collaboration and a desire for collective impact.

► Boston’s Healthcare Training Institute is an initiative of JVS Boston, the largest workforce development organization in the greater Boston area and an industry leader in incumbent worker training. Health care employers clustered in Boston’s Longwood Medical Area wanted an effective strategy for creating cohorts of learners across institutions and offering varying levels of English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. With support from the mayor’s office and SkillWorks Boston, HTI opened two community classrooms, giving employees from three area hospitals access to four levels of ESOL classes in a location convenient to the workplace. In addition, JVS incubated a number of successful incumbent worker programs, including “Bridges to College” for **Boston Children’s Hospital** and **Brigham and Women’s Hospital**, and basic computer skills training program for **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center**.

Integrate with Business Operations

Full integration of workforce development into business operations ensures sustainability and signals commitment to providing accessible career advancement opportunities for frontline staff.

- ▶ Education and learning are part of the overall strategic plan for **Norton Healthcare** in Louisville. Norton uses 100 percent operational dollars to fund the over \$9 million spent annually on workforce development initiatives. Norton maintains a learning culture anchored by a career development model that incorporates virtually every best practice mentioned in the CareerSTAT Guide. Its model offers frontline employees numerous opportunities to opt in to education and earn promotions through the support of Norton's workforce development initiatives, Institute for Nursing, and Norton University. When CEO Stephen Williams is asked why he is so committed to investing in the education of frontline employees, he says: "My commitment to advancement to the workplace is personal. I began working in health care as an orderly while in high school, joining Norton Healthcare 37 years ago. Our employees are by far our biggest asset. I want our valued employees to have the same opportunity and support I did in growing their Norton Healthcare career."⁷

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CALL TO ACTION

The CareerSTAT Champion organizations cited throughout this document demonstrate how health care employers making effective investments in frontline workers implement a wide array of business practices, all of which reinforce one another. Their strategic investments in frontline workforce development improve business impact and help more individuals attain certifications, licensures, and degrees that lead to advancement and higher wages. We encourage more health care employers to adopt a combination of these programmatic and organizational practices in a manner that supports business priorities and demonstrates commitment to developing the talent of the frontline workforce.

The CareerSTAT *Guide to Investing in Frontline Health Care Worker* provides a framework and tools for developing workforce development programs, aligning with key business metrics, and measuring impact and outcomes. It is written for health care leaders who are creating or operating programs for frontline workers and building the business case for organizational investment. The complete Guide is made up of five companion documents, including:

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- [Why Invest in Your Frontline Health Care Workforce?](#)
- [Employer Best Practices for Making Effective Investments](#)
- [A Framework for Integrating Workforce Investments with Business Impact](#)
- [Resources for Investing in Frontline Workers](#)

To read the full Guide or any of the companion documents visit <http://www.nationalfund.org/learning-evaluation/publications/guide-to-investing-in-frontline-health-care-workers/>.

ENDNOTES

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Frontline Health Care Worker Champions

CareerSTAT's Frontline Health Care Worker Champions are recognized by their peers for their sustained investment in skill and career development of frontline workers. Representing health care organizations across the care continuum, these industry leaders are improving health outcomes for patients and increasing their business impact by making learning and advancement more accessible for their frontline employees. Since 2014, CareerSTAT has recognized 25 organizations. Their practices, policies and strategic approach inform the CareerSTAT Guide, best practices, and resources. Learn more about the Frontline Health Care Worker Champion program at <http://www.nationalfund.org/initiatives/careerstat/frontline-health-care-champions/>.

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CareerSTAT is a network of health care leaders promoting investment in the skills and careers of frontline workers. It supports health care organizations in using workforce development programs to increase business impact, improve health outcomes, and provide good jobs. CareerSTAT produces an array of resources on the benefits of skill and career development, recognizes organizations leading the industry as Frontline Health Care Worker Champions, and tracks innovative practices for advancing frontline workers. CareerSTAT is an initiative of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and Jobs for the Future and is generously supported by The Joyce Foundation. To learn more about CareerSTAT, visit: <http://www.nationalfund.org/careerstat>.

Jobs for the Future develops, implements, and promotes new education and workforce strategies that help communities, states, and the nation compete in a global economy. In more than 200 communities across 43 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers.

The Joyce Foundation

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TEL 202.223.8994

CareerSTAT and National Fund for Workforce Solutions
1730 Rhode Island Ave NW #712, Washington, DC 20036

WWW.NATIONALFUND.ORG



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

TEL 617.728.4446 FAX 617.728.4857 info@jff.org

88 Broad Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02110 (HQ)
122 C Street, NW, Suite 650, Washington, DC 20001
505 14th Street, Suite 340, Oakland, CA 94612

WWW.JFF.ORG