

HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

A Catalyst for Action to Increase Employer Investments in Frontline Workers

EVALUATION REPORT

By Lisa Soricone

Introduction

Frontline, entry level healthcare workers are in high demand. They provide a range of routine and essential services in a continuum of healthcare settings, and are responsible for operations that include providing administrative, direct care, environmental, and technical services to patients, families, and caregivers¹. Although many entry level frontline healthcare positions are low paying, the industry offers career pathways to positions that provide family sustaining wages. However, industry leaders sometimes fail to recognize the valuable contributions of frontline staff and underinvest in their development. Consequently, frontline workers, many of whom are low-income parents of color, have limited skill development and career advancement opportunities.

CareerSTAT is leading to change this. An employer-led healthcare initiative of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, CareerSTAT seeks to increase employer investment in the skills and careers of frontline healthcare workers. The initiative achieves its goals by engaging a national network of over 300 professionals in peer learning, documenting industry practices, recognizing "champion" organizations, and providing technical assistance. As more healthcare leaders adopt evidence based practices, greater business impact is achieved as

upskilling and advancement opportunities enable more frontline workers to earn family sustaining wages, and ultimately improve health outcomes in local communities.

To accelerate the adoption of evidence based practices and increase frontline workforce investments, the National Fund created the CareerSTAT Healthcare Workforce Development Academy (Academy). This report describes the evaluation findings from the first cohort of 11 healthcare organizations that participated in the Academy. The evaluation aims to:

- > **Document the changes in business practices, programs, and policies implemented by healthcare organizations as a result of their participation in the Academy**
- > **Understand the impact such changes had on organizations and their frontline workers**
- > **Assess the value of the Academy for participating individuals and organizations**
- > **Draw lessons on making program and policy changes to support frontline healthcare workers**
- > **Gather feedback and provide recommendations on the structure and content of the Academy for future cohorts**

¹ <https://nationalfund.org/initiatives/careerstat/>

The evaluation of the Academy was conducted by JFF, a national nonprofit organization that supports change in workforce and educational systems to promote the economic advancement of individuals and families. Information for the evaluation was gathered through observation of Academy convenings, document review, and interviews with participants and technical assistance providers.

Healthcare Workforce Development Academy Overview

Launched in 2017, the Academy’s first cohort included 11 organizations, from multi-state health providers to individual long-term care facilities, that collectively employ over 40,000 frontline workers. The Academy provided a year-long peer learning experience for mid-level human resources and workforce development professionals to expand their knowledge, develop skills, and plan and implement specific organizational goals to advance their frontline workforce.

Goals and Participants

The Academy has two goals. The first is to increase individuals’ capacity to facilitate change at their organization. The second is to accelerate the adoption of best practices that promote frontline worker advancement.

Participants were recruited from the CareerSTAT network – targeting organizations previously recognized as CareerSTAT Emerging Champions as well as organizations that demonstrated commitment to increasing investments in frontline workers through existing initiatives.

Each participating employer committed to having at least one staff member consistently involved in the Academy year. In some cases, employers engaged a community partner (service provider) to participate as a team. Individuals needed to have mid-level decision-making authority within their organization and a desire to engage with workforce development peers. Academy participants were expected to actively engage in learning activities, submit and implement an action plan outlining goals for the year, provide regular progress reports, and participate in assessment and evaluation activities.

The Academy worked to increase individual participants’ competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) in seven peer-defined learning domains. As participants built or enhanced their competencies, the Academy provided the structure for assessing needs, developing plans, and putting those plans into action.

Healthcare Workforce Development Academy Participants

Advocate Aurora Health Downer’s Grove, IL & Milwaukee, WI	Methodist Healthcare System San Antonio, TX
Ascension Seton Austin, TX	Mercy Health Grand Rapids, MI
Baystate Health Springfield, MA	Parkland Hospital Dallas, TX
Boston Children’s Hospital Boston, MA	Tufts Medical Center Boston, MA
Guardian Elder Care & SEIU Training & Education Fund PA Harrisburg, PA	UC Davis Health Sacramento, CA
Loretto Syracuse, NY	

Academy Topics

1. Workforce planning
2. Building diverse talent pipelines
3. Building organizational infrastructure
4. Making the case for investment
5. Communicating success and engaging leaders
6. Working with partners and leveraging resources
7. Sustaining workforce development programs

The CareerSTAT [Guide to Investing in Frontline Health Care Workers](#) (CareerSTAT Guide) outlines programmatic and organizational best practices and provided Academy participants with a framework to drive change, improve the quality of frontline jobs, and create economic opportunity to underserved populations.²

² See the CareerSTAT [Guide to Investing in Frontline Health Care Workers](#), p. 4

CareerSTAT Best Practice Framework

Programmatic Best Practices

Engage frontline workers directly in training and education to make learning and career advancement accessible and expand talent pipelines.

1. Inclusive Hiring
2. Accessible Learning
3. Career Advancement

Organizational Best Practices

Ensure the needed infrastructure and support are in place so that education and training program have the greatest impact on organizations and individual workers.

1. Leadership Engagement
2. Infrastructure Development
3. Leveraged Resources

Academy Structure

CareerSTAT leaders designed the Academy around a four-part theory of action to facilitate organizational change:

1. **Structure and accountability** through self-assessments, the creation and implementation of action plans, and progress reports
2. **Expertise** provided by CareerSTAT network members and leadership, a team of experienced technical assistance providers, and Academy participants as peer mentors
3. **Peer exchange** to promote learning through the sharing of strategies and experiences
4. **Resources**, such as the CareerSTAT Guide, an online platform for information exchange, funds to support travel to meetings, and microgrants to support plan implementation

Academy activities included three in-person meetings, monthly webinars, regular peer accountability check-ins, one-on-one technical assistance, and regular communication through the online platform Basecamp. Academy participants were also eligible for a \$10,000 microgrant to support work outlined in action plans.

Evaluation Findings

Evaluation data was gathered through observation of Academy convenings, document review, and interviews with participants and technical assistance providers. The evaluation examines Academy participant achievements, the business impact of increased frontline worker investments, and the value of the Academy and larger CareerSTAT network.

Academy participants made great strides in defining organizational goals and implementing programmatic and organizational best practices. They also identified common barriers to success and strategies to sustain their achievements.

Organizational Goals

Using a self-assessment based on the CareerSTAT Best Practice Framework, participants established organizational goals to pursue during the Academy. Their goals included building local and inclusive worker pipelines, improving retention of frontline workers, and improving support for workers' advancement. Organizations also sought to build or strengthen internal structures and systems, including their capacity to measure the impact of workforce programs, conduct workforce planning analysis, and make the case for investing in frontline workers. Academy goals were often tied to organizational priorities to improve the quality of frontline jobs and address health disparities by offering economic opportunity to low income workers and local job seekers.

“The Academy helped us move faster and on a smoother path in making change. By talking to our peer organizations, we could anticipate and mitigate barriers before they slowed us down.”

– Patty Samra, Senior Director of Talent Acquisition and Workforce Planning, Baystate Health

Academy Achievements

The Academy served as a catalyst for action. Participants succeeded in establishing programs and services and creating the infrastructure to support frontline worker advancement over time. Every participating healthcare provider made progress on their organizational goals during the 12 month Academy and accomplished numerous achievements that reflect CareerSTAT best practices. While much of their work is ongoing, participants can point to specific achievements during the 12 month period. Some of these achievements are outlined in the table on the following page.

Programmatic Achievements

- Made learning more accessible by establishing onsite learning facilities and training programs (8*)
- Improved communications and transparency to help frontline workers understand and pursue available advancement opportunities (7)
- Established new technical training programs for incumbent workers (6)
- Established career coaching and mentoring services for frontline workers (5)
- Developed frontline workforce pipelines that intentionally expand diversity (4)
- Established competency-based apprenticeship programs (1)
- Redesigned onboarding process for frontline workers (1)
- Created an internal frontline worker recognition program (1)

Organizational Achievements

- Established or strengthened external partnerships with educational and training organizations to leverage resources (7)
- Trained supervisors and frontline managers to better support workers (5)
- Broke down silos to better align workforce development efforts across multiple departments (4)
- Revised human resource policies to enhance job quality and reduce financial barriers to continuing education (3)
- Expanded dedicated workforce staff, including one VP-level position, to coordinate business strategy and maximize opportunities (2)

*Value in parentheses indicates number of organizations engaged in the strategy

Below are just a few detailed examples of the many significant changes that Academy participants made in implementing CareerSTAT Best Practices.

PROGRAMMATIC BEST PRACTICES

Inclusive Hiring

To reduce turnover of patient care technicians (PCTs) and help local residents be more successful in the workplace, **Ascension Seton** established a partnership with their local training providers to form "Seton only" cohorts of PCTs. This gives Ascension Seton the opportunity to play a more active role around screening and pre-hire engagement. It also provides local residents with a more direct pathway to employment upon completion of the PCT training.

Accessible Learning

Tufts Medical Center piloted on-site, employer-paid ESOL classes for incumbent workers, which ultimately secured three years of state grant funding to expand the classes and offer paid release time to participants. In addition, Tufts established a partnership for online learning with Southern New Hampshire University and College for America (CfA) and aligned Tufts' current tuition reimbursement policy with the college's deferred billing process to reduce the burden of upfront costs for employees.

Career Advancement

Baystate Health developed a specific career mobility function to focus on employee transfers, career development, and retention. To do so, they added a career advisor to the talent management team and a career mobility consultant (internal recruiter) to talent acquisition. By the end of the Academy year, the organization filled 20 jobs via internal mobility.

ORGANIZATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Engaging Leaders

Loretto established a monthly retention team meeting involving leaders from 19 business units across the organization to share and implement retention strategies. In addition, staff incorporated a standing retention and coaching agenda item into all quarterly leadership meetings to help keep these issues front and center for organizational leaders.

Developing Infrastructure

Staff at **Boston Children's Hospital** strengthened multiple aspects of their workforce development infrastructure by establishing an internal website for employees and managers to access program information, developing a custom database to track workforce development activities, and creating

materials to market opportunities. These efforts give workforce development a more prominent presence in the organization, which will help attract greater participation in training and advancement opportunities.

Leveraging Resources

Mercy Health developed plans to create an on-site career center to serve external and incumbent job candidates. Their plan garnered attention and ultimately funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for a joint project with The SOURCE, a community-based organization, and West Michigan Works, a workforce development agency. The grant leverages substantial investments from Mercy Health. With this co-investment, the career center is expected to serve 450 participants over the next two years with 300 new hires from local neighborhoods and 150 Mercy Health employees advancing.

See the [Appendix](#) for a more comprehensive list of organizational achievements.

Barriers to Success

At the same time participants reported progress, they also described several challenges common during organizational change and frequently noted by CareerSTAT network members. From organizational mergers to limited funds to scale programs, participants experienced a range of hurdles that impacted their ability to quickly implement change. Bringing such issues to the group and brainstorming solutions became a regular, highly valued activity. Group problem solving allowed participants to feel less alone in their struggles, learn how others were able to overcome obstacles, and generate new ideas to address barriers to progress.

Common Barriers to Success

- Organizational mergers
- Leadership and staff changes
- Organizational culture and bureaucracy
- Lack of executive leadership support
- Buy-in among supervisors
- Limited funding
- Implementing practice changes across multi-site systems
- Shortage of dedicated time and capacity
- Overly ambitious goals

Sustaining Change

Academy members worked to ensure the sustainability of strategies to improve frontline workers' advancement in multiple ways. Participants secured resources, through the reallocation of internal or external funding streams, to support programs and services going forward. Many stressed building workforce infrastructure, such as designated staff positions, workforce plans and metrics, and systems for analyzing workforce needs and progress, as a necessary foundation for lasting change. These efforts helped to embed frontline advancement and broader career development strategy into regular operations. Participants acknowledged the importance of building such internal systems to move workforce development beyond the status of a grant funded program to an integrated and sustainable means for addressing organizational needs and individual opportunity.

Participants across sites reported continued momentum for investing in the frontline workforce. All organizations have plans to continue some aspect of the work undertaken during the Academy, including measuring impact through 2019. As they achieved their Academy goals, and were inspired by peers and the Academy experience, many participants plan to pursue new goals – such as adding training, institutionalizing functions like coaching and career development services, and pursuing policy changes to offer upfront tuition support to help frontline workers more easily afford the continued training necessary for advancement.

“The Academy really helped us bring frontline needs to the forefront and into discussions at our Division level. We had a Leadership Institute for directors, supervisors, and managers. Now our team is looking at what we can do to support frontline workers.”

– Carolyn King, Director of Grants & Clinical Education Operations,
Methodist Healthcare System of San Antonio

Impact of Investments

In addition to establishing new frontline worker development programs, Academy participants shifted organizational boundaries, altered the perspectives of leaders and workers themselves, and changed practice and policy in their organizations. These efforts to change organizational systems and structures create the conditions for expanding investments in frontline workers over a longer period of time. The initial impact of the Academy accomplishments includes increased business impact, culture change, and greater integration of individual workforce development programs with overall organizational priorities.

Business Impact

Sustaining frontline workforce investments requires ongoing demonstration of business impact using both quantitative and qualitative measures. The experience of the CareerSTAT network shows that integrating an analysis of business impact with workforce investments helps to make the case to senior leadership for further investments. Identifying metrics, gathering data and documenting compelling stories are important steps to understanding impact and informing future program design investment.

Each organization's action plan identified key metrics to assess the business impact of changes made, including frontline worker retention, turnover, time to fill positions, engagement, productivity, career advancement/promotions, and benefits associated with career coaching. While the timeline did not permit all organizations to report on impact, all participants plan to assess the impact of their efforts into 2019.

Several organizations prioritized data collection to better assess the impact workforce investment has on key business metrics. Many noted their need for continued skill development and technical assistance to effectively measure business impact.

Culture Change

As organizations establish new programs and build infrastructure, new norms, values, and practices take hold and transform a work environment. While the Academy timeframe didn't allow sites to achieve deep culture change across large organizations, most participants noted the elevation of workforce development within their organization as a significant impact. Participants reported that as leaders and managers became more informed about the contributions and needs of frontline workers, their willingness to prioritize workforce development increased. In addition, frontline workers themselves felt more empowered and optimistic, knowing their organizations actively support personal growth and career development.

Business Impact

Three participants provided early results:

- > **Parkland Hospital**, which benefits from an especially strong analytic capacity, documented a **26% increase in employee satisfaction**, as well as a **200% increase in retention** among employees who participated in workforce development programs, which translates into savings of \$1.4 million for the organization.
- > As **Advocate Aurora Health** rolled out a more comprehensive workforce development strategy to its incumbent workers, the organization reports a reduction in first year turnover from **29% to 10%**.
- > For **Baystate Health**, adding a full-time internal recruiter and career advisor brought benefits that have implications for both cost and productivity. They reduced the time to fill select administrative support and entry clinical support positions from an average of **47 days to 27.5**, and time to start was reduced from **75 to 51.5 days** on average.

Academy participants noted seemingly small changes had big impact to shift culture at their organizations. At Tufts Medical Center, relocating English classes from basement conference rooms to the upper-level human resource training room elevated the status of the classes and emphasized the professional nature of the program. Parkland launched the ROSE Award to recognize the contributions of patient care technicians. This monthly award boosts morale and draws attention to the valuable contributions of the frontline workforce.

Integrated Strategies

As outlined in the CareerSTAT *Guide*, healthcare organizations with sustained workforce development programming demonstrate a high level of integration between organizational strategy, workforce investments, and impact measurement. In addition, organizational culture recognizes the value of frontline workers in the overall success of delivering high quality care. Of the 11 participants, 80% demonstrated a shift to better integrate workforce investment strategies with organizational priorities and business impact analysis. In some cases, organizational priorities and investments moved workforce development from a grant funded project to an embedded function in the organization – a key metric of a sustainable investment strategy.

Value of the Academy and CareerSTAT Network

Participants described the Academy as a powerful peer learning opportunity that provided structure to advance organizational change. They reported the unique peer community, connection to a national network, inherent accountability, and professional development opportunities as highly valuable catalysts for action.

A Unique Peer Community

Participants rated access to an engaged professional peer network immersed in similar work as the highest value of the Academy. Several participants noted feeling relatively isolated within their institutions as they champion greater frontline worker investments. In the Academy, these individuals found like-minded peers who offered encouragement and valuable suggestions to address challenges and inspire ideas for future work.

As a result, participants recognized their own expertise and increased confidence in their strategies. Even CareerSTAT leaders, whose organizations are recognized as Frontline Healthcare Worker Champions, reported value and continued learning from their roles as peer mentors in the Academy.

“The Academy was transformative for me, having the opportunity to engage in these conversations in a safe environment, with people at higher levels and at a more advanced stage of the work – but they are not your colleagues, so there’s a freedom to have a discourse, engage in a way that’s different than at your own workplace.”

– Jacqueline Chernoble, Vice President of Business Services,
Jewish Vocational Service

Connection to the National CareerSTAT Network

As a national network, CareerSTAT exposed Academy participants to strategies used across the nation and thus lent credibility to new plans and ideas within each organization. Academy participants noted that being part of a national initiative and network put them in a stronger position when engaging senior leadership to expand and sustain frontline worker investments.

“Being a part of the Academy lent credibility when engaging our executive leadership team. We showed up with a sense of confidence. We could say “We have a plan. Here are our community partners.” We still had to jump through hoops, like needing space, but leadership saw the importance of our work and could act on our behalf. That executive sponsorship was super important.”

– Debra Rockey, Regional Director Organizational Development & Talent Management, Mercy Health

Inherent Accountability

Participants also valued the catalytic nature of the Academy structure. Action plan templates and required, regular progress updates established a shared accountability among participants that propelled them to prioritize action with their organizations.

Professional Development Opportunities

With a focus on increasing individuals’ capacity to facilitate change, the structured opportunity to gain knowledge and skills specific to workforce development was invaluable. Participant reactions suggest a need for more professional development opportunities for workforce development professionals. Some participants suggested creating an Academy certification, which would codify and document the attainment of the specific competencies required for frontline healthcare worker advancement.

The Academy experience also raised participants’ professional profile and elevated their engagement within the larger CareerSTAT network. Participants regularly act as CareerSTAT ambassadors, encouraging colleagues and partners to join the network. Academy participants shared their learning with peers at conference and webinar presentations. Two Academy participants joined the CareerSTAT executive committee.

Participants expressed a very strong desire to maintain contact with their cohort beyond the Academy year. Many felt that a single year seemed too short, as they want the continued support of colleagues as they work to achieve outstanding goals.

“Where is the support system for workforce development directors in healthcare that focus on frontline employees? The Academy is really filling a gap in figuring out how to move the needle.”

– Clayton Pryor, Director Workforce Development,
Advocate Aurora Health

Lessons for Making Change to Support Frontline Workers

As is common among organizational change initiatives, Academy participants pursued goals that require relationship building, engagement with multiple levels of organizations, communication, time, and persistence. A need for change and a vision for action should be tied to broader organizational or community goals.

The Academy experience points to several key elements that can facilitate or accelerate change to expand and sustain investments in the frontline workforce:

- **Leadership engagement and support:** There was great value of engaging C-suite leaders who promoted change efforts with budgetary support and approvals for dedicated space and staff. By sending a message that “this is how we are going to do business” leaders help stem resistance and encourage support and cooperation across levels and sites within organizations and large healthcare systems.
- **Clear plans:** It was evident establishing an action plan and timeline encouraged participant progress. Internally, plans clarified goals, identified resource needs, and established benchmarks for success. Creating these plans required time and effort to build consensus for commitment and resources but ensured the viability and sustainability of making change.
- **Resources:** A range of resources supported participants’ work, including dedicated staff to focus specifically on frontline workforce investments, external funding to make significant infrastructure changes, and redirecting operational funds or mobilizing existing resources – such as space, staff, and data and analytic tools – to establish new opportunities for frontline workers. Many organizations also found important support in community partner organizations who provide critical complementary services.
- **Champions:** All organizations recognized the importance of cultivating champions at all levels of organizations, from high level leaders to supervisors and frontline workers themselves. Champions help others see the value and opportunity in frontline investments and encourage a strong commitment to support worker growth and advancement.
- **Structure and routines:** To help sustain and institutionalize their work, Academy participants often established structures and routines. Examples include workforce plans with structured benchmarks and target goals, the creation of cross-organizational teams committed to career advancement, and regular communications to highlight frontline worker support and investment.

- **Analytic tools:** Academy participants cited data as a valuable tool to demonstrate outcomes and make the case for increased investments in frontline workers and new workforce pipelines. By identifying specific metrics, many participants were able to document success and garner resources to build new systems or leverage existing systems to demonstrate frontline worker progress.
- **Experts and information:** Participants reported that cultivating frontline worker investment often felt like forging new ground with no road map. Being able to access Academy resources, such as frameworks, tools, and reports, as well as expert professionals, provided direction and accelerated participants’ progress. For some, hiring local consultants augmented individual staff capacity and helped to establish new functions and services.
- **Peer support:** Participants clearly valued having a peer network to draw on for inspiration, ideas, and motivation. Seeing what others could accomplish elsewhere often inspired participants to try new approaches in their own organizations. Knowing that other individuals had similar experiences encouraged perseverance as participants encountered challenges. Participants appreciated the opportunity to share struggles and successes with others who understood the effort involved to achieve even small gains.

▲▲ *Be bold, document a big vision, share the vision with your community partners and believe in them so that together you can make it a reality... and have fun along the way.* ▲▲

– Shana Welch, Executive Director, Talent Acquisition, Mercy Health

Moving Forward

With its two-pronged strategy to accelerate the adoption of best practices and increase individual capacity, the Healthcare Workforce Development Academy fills an industry need for structured learning, actionable goal setting, and peer support. The participating organizations made significant progress in implementing evidence based strategies to recruit and retain essential frontline workers while individual participants increased their knowledge, skill, and capacity to facilitate change.

Recommendations

The Academy experience offers important insights that can inform future efforts to support the advancement of frontline workers. This section offers recommendations for employers, the National Fund, and funders looking to invest in these efforts.

Employers

The Academy offers a great opportunity for organizations with a sincere commitment to developing and advancing their frontline workforce. To maximize the Academy opportunity, organizations should:

- Ensure that senior leadership fully understands the value and daily reality of frontline workers.
- Assemble a cross-functional team that brings together human resource, talent acquisition, and organizational development staff, as well as any strong community partners to fully realize a vision for a frontline worker advancement strategy.
- Mobilize organizational resources to support the implementation of programs, policies, and infrastructure to support frontline workers. Remove barriers and designate staff to implement and test frontline advancement strategies.

The National Fund

All organizations expressed high satisfaction with the Academy experience and recommend offering the opportunity to more healthcare providers. The individuals greatly appreciated peer connection and the ability to share experiences and resources. Going forward, the National Fund should:

- **Maintain the overall structure of the Academy** with multiple in-person meetings and opportunities for regular interaction, including webinars and an online portal for updates and information exchange.
- **Consider a two year timeframe** to allow for planning, implementation, and more time to institutionalize and scale organizational change. Academy participants felt that the year-long experience established momentum, but much work remains, and they have a strong desire for continued peer support and accountability.
- **Sustain connections** to grow the network. Participants unanimously expressed desire for continued connection to their Academy network. The National Fund can use its national convenings as an opportunity to re-convene the inaugural cohort, as well as support its connection to subsequent cohorts and the larger CareerSTAT network.
- **Engage CEOs/high level leaders** of participating institutions to raise the profile of workforce development, help bring leaders into a community of employers that are prioritizing frontline worker advancement as a business strategy and galvanize organizational leaders to be part of a broader national movement.
- **Consider development of a certification** for staff that build and implement frontline worker advancement programs and strategies. CareerSTAT defined criteria for organizations to gain recognition as frontline healthcare worker champions, but to move the field at scale, a CareerSTAT certification for individual staff would help to clarify what competencies and knowledge are required to make change in organizations.

- **Continue to follow the progress of Academy organizations** to more fully understand the impact of the Academy. More time is needed to document and analyze how populations were served by changes made during the Academy and individual outcomes as they advance within their organizations.

Funders

The success of this first cohort of the Academy suggests structured peer learning is a worthwhile investment for funders interested in promoting opportunity for the frontline healthcare workforce. In the future, funders should:

- Invest in the Academy peer network backed by the expertise possessed by CareerSTAT and the National Fund. Participants reported that being part of the Academy network prioritized and accelerated the adoption of best practices for frontline investments. Many said their accomplishments would not have happened or would have taken much longer without the Academy. The structure and accountability of the Academy and the resources of the network and CareerSTAT staff were significant supports to change.
- Provide multi-year funding to allow organizations sufficient time to plan, implement, evaluate and institutionalize programs and policies that promote frontline worker advancement. Academy participants made great progress during one year, but most acknowledged that much work remains and more time was needed to measure and document success and fully understand the business impact of frontline workforce development.

Conclusion

The Healthcare Workforce Development Academy was a successful vehicle to drive increased investments that support the advancement of frontline workers. Participating organizations made great strides to adopt programmatic and organizational best practices to increase and sustain frontline workforce investments. They successfully established or revised programs, services, policies, and infrastructure to expand opportunities for entry level healthcare employees. Academy participants also shifted organizational boundaries and perspectives, resulting in increased business impact, cultural changes, and greater integration of workforce development programs with organizational priorities.

A structured peer learning environment filled an important professional development need among workforce development practitioners in healthcare. Individual participants increased their competency to lead systemic change and nearly all participants experienced tangible progress towards actionable goals. These results reinforce the value of the CareerSTAT network to the broader field of workforce development in healthcare.

Healthcare Workforce Development Academy Participant Achievements

Advocate Aurora Health

Downers Grove, IL
Milwaukee, WI

Frontline workers: 35,000
Total employees: 70,000
Facility type: Integrated Hospital System

Featured Best Practices:

- > Expanding Career Advancement Opportunities
- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Accessible Learning

Select Accomplishments

- Created new organizational infrastructure by establishing a system-wide Workforce Development Department headed by a new senior level position entitled Vice President of Team Member & Workforce Development
- Expanded NAVIGATE, an incumbent worker program that targets frontline workers to identify goals and access resources and opportunities to advance, to multiple sites including the largest flagship trauma center
- Created a medical assistant training program, in partnership with community college, to upskill incumbent workers into high demand roles

Ascension Seton

Austin, TX

Frontline workers: 7,000
Total employees: 12,500
Facility type: Healthcare System

Featured Best Practices:

- > Career Advancement
- > Accessible Learning
- > Leveraging Resources

Select Accomplishments

- Solidified industry commitment to solve common healthcare workforce challenges by collaborating with 16 local partners to create the Central Texas Healthcare Partnership
- Expanded pipeline for patient care technicians (PCTs) and increase the success of new workers by developing a partnership with local community organization to select and train "Seton-only" cohorts
- Reduced barriers to attend surgical technologist and nurse pre-requisite courses by establishing a textbook lending library for employees

Baystate Health

Springfield, MA

Frontline workers: 2,000
Total employees: 12,0500
Facility type: Acute Care Hospital

Featured Best Practices:

- > Expanding Career Advancement Opportunities
- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Accessible Learning
- > Inclusive Hiring

Select Accomplishments

- Completed three-year hiring projections, which helped garner leadership buy-in for multiple frontline investment strategies
- Expanded workforce development infrastructure by creating two new positions – career advisor and career mobility consultant – designed specifically to increase career mobility of incumbent workers
- Assessed current policies and practices to identify barriers to inclusive, local hire and frontline worker advancement, and created an action plan to address and revise policies
- Established registered apprenticeships for pharmacy and HVAC technicians, and apprenticeships for polysomnography and cardiac monitor technicians are in various stages of development

Boston Children's Hospital

Boston, MA

Frontline workers: 4,500

Total employees: 11,291

Facility type: Specialty Acute Care Hospital

Featured Best Practices:

- > Expanding Career Advancement Opportunities
- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Accessible Learning
- > Leveraging Resources

Select Accomplishments

- Strengthened its workforce development infrastructure by establishing an internal website for employees and managers to access information on programs, developing a custom database to track workforce development activities, and creating internal marketing materials for training and advancement opportunities
- Launched a pre-college English and Math program to reduce basic skill barriers to career progress
- Established a partnership with College for America to offer online learning to employees, with over 80 workers enrolled thus far

Guardian Elder Care

Harrisburg, PA

Frontline workers: 4,700

Total employees: 1,900

Facility type: Long Term Care

Featured Best Practices:

- > Career Advancement
- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Engaging leaders

SEIU Healthcare PA Training & Education Fund

Partners with 57 Long Term Facilities and Two Hospitals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Select Accomplishments

- Developed a mentor training for frontline workers, which enables them to move up to advance job categories and secure increased wages
- Improved data collection system to be able to track the turnover and retention of participants in skills enhancement classes, particularly LPNs, CNAs, PCAs, and employees in dietary, housekeeping, laundry, and maintenance
- Launched "servant leadership" training for mid-level supervisors to strengthen leadership, mentoring, and coaching skills

Loretto

Syracuse, NY

Frontline workers: 1,480

Total employees: ~ 2,300

Facility type: Post-Acute Care

Featured Best Practices:

- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Engaging leaders

Select Accomplishments

- Instituted evidence based supervisory training – PHI Coaching Supervision® – for 150 new and current managers
- Piloted a career coach position to provide support to home health aides, CNAs, and dietary workers
- Collaborated with IT department to produce monthly data reports on detailed retention metrics shared automatically with managers across the organization
- Institutionalized cross-organizational collaboration through monthly team meetings that engage champions from 19 different business units to share and implement retention approaches in their facilities

Mercy Health

Grand Rapids, MI

Frontline workers: 8,634

Total employees: 2,892

Facility type: Healthcare System

Featured Best Practices:

- > Expanding Career Advancement Opportunities
- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Accessible Learning
- > Leveraging Resources

Select Accomplishments

- Constructed an on-site career center to serve external and incumbent job candidates
- Established a collective impact team with two community partners to provide career development support through career coaching, create a referral process for highly qualified candidates, and provide wrap-around support services

Methodist Healthcare System of San Antonio

San Antonio, TX

Frontline workers: 3,656

Total employees: 10,000+

Facility type: Healthcare System

Featured Best Practices:

- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Accessible Learning
- > Engaging Leaders
- > Leveraging Resources

Select Accomplishments

- Achieved ROI Institute certification to build capacity to measure business impact and ROI of workforce development activities
- Increased its tuition reimbursement from \$1,800 to \$5,250 per year with no maximum as long as an individual is employed with the organization
- Created a mentorship program that pairs first-year nurse residents with an experienced registered nurse

Parkland Hospital

Dallas, TX

Frontline workers: 1,500+

Total employees: 12,500

Facility type: Acute Care Hospital

Featured Best Practices:

- > Expanding Career Advancement Opportunities
- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Inclusive Hiring

Select Accomplishments

- Launched the ROSE Award to recognize the contributions of frontline workers on a monthly basis
- Revised and implemented the onboarding process, emphasizing organizational culture and mission
- Launched a patient care assistant apprenticeship
- Formalized relationships with community partners to develop a pipeline of local, job-ready individuals in underserved areas for placement in high demand positions

Tufts Medical Center

Boston, MA

Frontline workers: 2,510

Total employees: 5,429

Facility type: Academic Medical Center

Featured Best Practices:

- > Engaging Leaders
- > Developing Infrastructure
- > Accessible Learning
- > Leveraging Resources

Select Accomplishments

- Established foundational programs for frontline workers, including reinstating on-site, employer-paid ESOL classes, launching a partnership with College for America and a revised tuition assistance policy to allow for deferred billing, and building an internal Healthcare Service Certificate program
 - Secured senior leadership investment in multi-year workforce development strategy
 - Launched Career Pathways initiative to provide a career path roadmap for incumbent employees with integrated/aligned essential and technical skills training
-

UC Davis Health System

Sacramento, CA

Frontline workers: 3,209

Total employees: 10,300

Facility type: Healthcare System

Featured Best Practices:

- > Engaging Leaders
- > Accessible Learning

Select Accomplishments

- Secured leadership support to implement an on-site ESOL training program
-

Acknowledgements

The *Healthcare Workforce Development Academy: A Catalyst for Action to Increase Employer Investments in Frontline Workers* report was written by Lisa Soricone, research director at Jobs for the Future, with editorial support from National Fund for Workforce Solutions staff members, Kelly Aiken, vice president of programs and CareerSTAT director, Melissa Kleder, CareerSTAT program manager, Lisa Chensvold, marketing and communications director, and Joshua Enoch, communications associate. We thank each for their contribution to this report. We also extend our gratitude to the CareerSTAT Executive Committee, CareerSTAT Technical Assistance Committee, and Academy participants for their contribution to this report and role in making the first cohort of the Academy a success.



CareerSTAT is a network of healthcare leaders promoting investment in the skills and careers of frontline workers. It supports healthcare organizations in using workforce development programs to increase business impact, improve health outcomes, and provide good jobs. CareerSTAT promotes innovative practices and policies for advancing frontline workers, 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 supports organizations developing investment programs. CareerSTAT is an initiative of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions. To learn more about CareerSTAT and its partners, visit: www.NationalFund.org/initiatives/careerstat/.



The National Fund for Workforce Solutions is a national network promoting economic opportunity and prosperous communities through investment and innovation. Based in Washington D.C., the National Fund partners with philanthropy, employers, workers, public and private community organizations, and more than 30 regional collaboratives to invest in skills, improve workforce systems, and promote good jobs. The National Fund supports civic and business leaders in promoting evidence based practices and policies that build shared prosperity. Learn more about the National Fund and its local partners at www.NationalFund.org.

TEL 202-223-8994 | info@nationalfund.org
1730 Rhode Island Ave NW #712, Washington, DC 20036
WWW.NATIONALFUND.ORG

Supported by



A Partner With Communities Where Children Come First