

Tri-County Health Skills Panel



A Strategic Plan for Addressing Critical Health Care Workforce Issues

Tri-County Workforce Council

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Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
A Strategic Plan For Addressing Critical Health Care Workforce Issues

Part One: Mission & Goals

Mission: To develop a “grow your own” workforce strategy in the Tri-County region through an effective partnership with employers, education and training programs, and workforce programs to fill needs of high demand and critical health care occupations.

Desired Outcomes:

- The ability to grow our own health care workers so recruitment and retention will become less of an issue over time.
- A coordinated system of education and training providers with a well-defined core curriculum for health occupations.
- The ability to provide advanced training in the Tri-County region for most health care workers through local or distance learning programs.
- Enhance the recruitment and retention of specialty health care occupations.
- Improve the preparedness of the local population to enter health care education and training programs:
 - Improve competencies in math, science, and writing skills
 - Increase access to support programs including transportation and child care
- Reduce financial barriers to enter and complete health care related training and education programs.

Critical Occupations:

All levels of nursing: Medical assistants, LPNs, RNs, nurse practitioners (especially in rural areas), and masters-level nurse educators.

Technicians & Technologists: Imaging, laboratory and specialized technologists (i.e. nuclear medicine technologists). These occupations are difficult to recruit to the Tri-County area. There are few annual openings, yet they are critical to health care operations.

Therapists: Occupational, speech and physical therapists that are needed in health care settings, a variety of social service agencies, and schools.

Dental and Pharmacy Occupations: Dental assistants and hygienists, and dentists. Pharmacists and pharmacy techs.

Other Occupations with growing or changing demand:

Medical Office Occupations: Medical records technologists, medical records coders and transcriptionists, and bi-lingual medical translators

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: To increase student and adult awareness about the broad array of health care careers.

Objectives:

- A. Awareness about the array of jobs: Increase student awareness about jobs outside of the “usual” occupations (e.g. physicians, nursing and pharmacists) to include jobs in areas such as imaging and lab technology or physical and occupational therapy.
- B. Diversification of workforce: Increase outreach to minority and male populations.
- C. Outreach to adults: Target outreach and public relations efforts to adults age 30-40 who wish to change careers.

Short-term Recommendations:

- Expand and maintain a Resource Library and website that contains detailed information about health care careers and education, lesson plans for teachers and regional and state education programs. Build on the resources that have been developed by ConneX and other state and national efforts including the www.healthjobs4you.com website.
- Coordinate and effectively leverage the resources of the wide array of existing health care occupations outreach activities being targeted to K-12 and post-secondary students, and to expand outreach to include adult populations.

Long-term Recommendations:

- Establish hands-on experiences for students including exploratory “rotations” where high school students can get workplace exposure to a variety of health care occupations, and investigate the feasibility of a summer camp to explore health care careers.

Goal 2: Increase the number of students and adults prepared to enter health care fields.

Objectives:

- A. Shared curriculum: Identify core curriculum that is shared among high school and colleges that includes the prerequisite courses required for most health care programs.
- B. Access for small and rural schools: Enhance partnerships among high school and post-secondary education to maintain and increase access to science and other prerequisite classes. (i.e. small schools may not have enough students for an advanced class by themselves, but if partnered with other schools can expand their offerings of prerequisites.)
- C. Connection to bi-lingual populations: Examine ways to connect ESL (English as a second Language) with basic science and other health sciences prerequisites.

Short-term Recommendations:

- Implement a core curriculum for Allied Health programs at Yakima Valley Community College (YVCC) that provides the foundation courses for programs in nursing, pharmacy

technician, medical interpreter, billing and coding, medical assisting and surgical technology (Starting Fall 2003).

- Using the career ladder skills and prerequisites from the Resource Library (Goal #1 Action), identify regional programs that prepare students to enter healthcare fields. Specifically:
 - Identify the gaps in the current programs; develop plans to increase capacity and identify what new programs may be needed,
 - Educate counselors and teachers about prerequisites and programs that prepare students to enter health care fields, and
 - Leverage outreach efforts to connect students with the most appropriate preparatory program.

Long-term Recommendations:

- Work with local school districts to raise student achievement in math and science to assure students are prepared for post-secondary studies in health care.
- Develop science and math courses that can be articulated into YVCC health care programs. [Model Denver Public Schools and Community College of Denver]

Goal 3: Enhance the local ability to grow our own health care workers by increasing access to, and affordability and capacity of local education and training programs.

Objectives:

- A. Facilities: Increase space options to enhance facilities capacity in the region.
- B. Clinicals: Enhance the ability to schedule clinical sites in a timely manner.
- C. Accessibility: Increase the ability for incumbent workers to access education programs by delivering classes during times and in locations that correspond to work schedules. (Pay special attention to programs that advance health care career ladders... medical assistant to LPN, LPN to RN, etc.)
- D. Affordability of health care programs: Increase the amount of scholarship funds available to high school students and adults who enter and complete local health care education and training programs. Allow scholarship funds to be extended over longer periods of time and to be used for pre-requisite classes.

Short-term Recommendations:

- Develop and coordinate apprenticeship programs with health care employers that allow students to study and earn wages. Registered apprenticeships are an effective education alternative that accelerates the learning process through on-the-job training coupled with supplemental classroom instruction.
- Enhance access and the capacity of education programs by increasing distance learning capacity.
 - Work with Oregon & Washington education and training institutions to develop modular training that allows health care personnel to complete training in incremental steps leading to recognized promotions and wage increases.

- Enhance online or distance learning opportunities for people to advance within their existing career path (e.g. certified LPNs are able to take courses at their own convenience towards becoming an RN).

Long-term Recommendations:

- Develop foundation skills in the workplace for entry-level workers:
 - Establish online and on-site course for aides and other entry level unlicensed assistive personnel (UAPs) to gain foundation skills in preparation for additional training (e.g. medical terminology).
- Explore the feasibility of workforce development funds to establish a prepaid tuition pool where the Workforce Development Council prepays tuition for a student's education at local post-secondary programs and employers repay the Council instead of the individual.

Goal 4: Increase the Tri-County region's ability to recruit and retain specialty occupations that may have a low number of annual openings yet are critical to operations and patient care.

Objectives:

- A. Partnerships with educational institutions out of the region: Partner with other Washington colleges and universities to develop education programs/agreements for bachelor and master degree nurses, imaging specializations, and other advanced health care occupations that do not have local education or training programs or enough capacity in local programs.
- B. Funds for advanced education and training: Increase the availability of scholarship funds (including funds to hire temporary replacement workers) to allow more nurses to pursue advanced degrees, and to cross-train imaging and laboratory technicians and technologists.
- C. Repayment Assistance: Examine ways to increase the assistance available for the repayment of student loans.

Short-term Recommendations:

- Establish a career specialist position who would be a resource for workers seeking additional health care training. [Modeled after Tacoma Pierce County career specialist]. This person would rotate among regional employers and education programs and help employers to connect to advanced training outside the region.
- Identify and prioritize a top-ten list of specialist occupations needed by employers in the Tri-County region. Investigate models that would increase the recruitment and retention of these specialists including, but not limited to, loan repayment programs, advanced training, and workplace redesign efforts.

Long-term Recommendations:

- Develop effective working relationships between local educational institutions and other statewide institutions offering advanced education. Ensure that local health care programs can be articulated into other state institutions with bachelors and masters programs.

Goal 5: Actively participate in legislative issues affecting health care and efforts to streamline state and federal regulations.

Objectives:

- A. Enhance participation in statewide efforts: Enhance the region's voice and participation in statewide, health care related legislative and regulatory issues.

Ongoing Recommendation:

- Establish a communication system to keep local health care and service providers informed of and engaged in legislative and regulatory issues.

Part Two: Operations & Funding

WDC Structural Support

To ensure that health care occupations are adequately addressed in the Tri-County region will require that the Workforce Development Council commit resources and energy to the stated objectives of the Skills Panel. Best practices and recommendations from other skill panels in the state indicate four steps that the Tri-County WDC can take within the next four months:

- **Fund Immediate Projects:** There are several short-term projects where existing funds may be used to conduct the first phase of these recommendations. They include:
 - Funding a faculty position to implement the core curriculum for the Allied Health Care Program at Yakima Community College and assisting YVCC with making the connections to employers to ensure lab and equipment space to operate the program in Fall 2003. (Action 2A)
 - Funding the initial planning and development of an apprenticeship program through adult program funds. (Action 3A)
 - Funding the two projects with incumbent worker funds: needs assessment of specialists and the career specialist. (Actions 4A & 4B)
- **Dedicate Resources:** Apply for a Skills Panel grant from the State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to fund a Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel. Specifically use the funds to:
 - Obtain a dedicated staff person to oversee and convene the Skills Panel and and work with other skills panels in Washington.
 - Oversee and coordinate actions recommended by the skill panel.
 - Expand marketing and outreach materials, building on existing efforts (Actions 1A and 1B).
 - Conducting two or three feasibility studies including the inventory of preparatory programs (Action 2B), and the identification of distance learning needs (Action 3B)
- **Improve Program Eligibility:** Review and make appropriate changes to eligibility requirements for adult and dislocated worker programs to ensure that people seeking health care careers can obtain assistance from existing funding sources. Use Tacoma Pierce

County Workforce Development Council as a model that defined eligibility as “self-sufficiency.”

- **Raise Internal Awareness:** Ensure that a wide range of WDC staff involved in youth, adult and dislocated programs are aware of health care opportunities in the region and can direct job seekers and program participants to appropriate resources. This “awareness training” can be a simple presentation during existing staff and program meetings with a clear and concise resource guide that is left with staff. *(Best practices indicate that an informed staff is the best wholesalers for successful programs.)*
- **Identify Funding Opportunities:** Work with the State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to identify and apply for grants and funds that meet specific program recommendations of the Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel. (See Funding Options.)

Funding Options

In addition to the existing WIA funding sources, the Workforce Development Council should explore additional health care funding opportunities including:

- Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board Skills Panel funds to provide support for the establishment and operations of a regional health care skills panel.
- Industries for the Future (IFST) funds address industry identified training needs in the context of sectoral and cluster based economic development. The primary goal of IFST is to help the workforce development system and employers to reduce the skills gap and provide workers with skills that will avert layoff and/or lead to higher earnings. Requires employer match.
- Governor’s Policy Initiatives that may include dislocated workers, career education in K-12, WorkSource marketing, low-income workers, and displaced homemakers.
- Youth Development Workforce Projects (Employment and Training Division of the Workforce Board) to explore funding for youth programs.
- Job Skills Program (JSP) brings together employers and educational institutions to provide customized employee training. State JSP funds, combined with employer match, support four types of training:
 1. New employee training for prospective employees before a new plant opens or when a company expands.
 2. Current employee training when retraining is required to prevent the dislocation of those employees.
 3. Current employee upgrading enhancing productivity for advancement opportunities with greater skills and responsibilities.
 4. Industry initiatives supporting development of customized training programs for several companies within an industry.
- The state health scholarships and loan repayment program serves undergraduate nurses and can provide loan repayments for individuals intending to become nursing or other allied health faculty. See their web site at: <http://www.hecb.wa.gov/paying/waaidprgm/health.asp>

Kathy McVay is the administrator for the state program and she can answer more questions about this. kathy.mcvay@doh.wa.gov (360) 705-6665

Other Federal Programs

- A variety of federal grant programs for various health care occupations can be found at the Bureau of Health Professions Web site: <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/default.htm>
- Personal Re-employment Accounts (Federal Plan as part of the new Back to Work Incentive Act): A Personal Reemployment Account provides certain eligible individuals currently receiving UI benefits, or some UI exhaustees, with a special worker-managed account of up to \$3,000 (the exact amount to be determined by the state) to purchase intensive reemployment, training and supportive services. Account recipients may choose to access and purchase intensive reemployment, training and supportive services currently available through the One-Stop Career Center system; use the account funds to purchase these service offerings from providers outside of the One-Stop Career Center system or develop a reemployment strategy that combines services from both components. Allowable uses for account funds include: career counseling, occupational skills training, skills upgrading, childcare, transportation expenses and financial literacy counseling.
- H1B Grants: Grants are awarded to Workforce Investment Boards and to business partnerships to provide technical skills training to American workers, so that firms can lessen their dependence on high skilled foreign workers. Grants are awarded to regions with a critical shortage of high skilled occupations (occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or higher) and where employers have a high number of H1B applications for workers. A consortia of WIBs can apply for grants.

Philanthropic Options:

In addition to state and federal workforce funds, philanthropic sources can be used to help individuals and programs. Examples include:

Helene Fuld Health Trust: The Nation's largest private foundation devoted exclusively to supporting student nurses and nursing education. <http://www.fuld.org>

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The largest U.S. foundation devoted to improving the health and health care of Americans. <http://www.rwjf.org/index.jsp>

The Jeannette Rankin Foundation (JRF) awards scholarships to women 35 years of age and older who, through undergraduate or vocational education, are seeking to better themselves, their families and their communities. All applicants for this scholarship must be Low-income women, at least 35 years of age as of April 1, 2003, U.S. citizens, pursuing a technical/vocational degree, an associate degree, or a first bachelor's degree, enrolled or accepted in an accredited school for the fall of 2003. The deadline to apply is March 1, 2003. To find the exact income guidelines for this program (ex. for 1 person, \$11,160 year), or to apply, go to: <http://www.rankinfoundation.org/apply.htm>
Additional information is available on the Foundation's web site or you can contact the Foundation office directly at tel. (706) 208-1211.

Part Three: Short-term Action Plan Detail

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal #1: To increase student and adult awareness about the broad array of health care careers

Action #1A

Expand and maintain a Resource Library and website that contains detailed information about health care careers and education, lesson plans for teachers, and regional and state education programs. Build on the resources that have been developed by ConneX and other state and national efforts including the “Health Jobs 4 You” campaign developed by Tacoma/Pierce County Skills Panel

Desired Outcome/Results

Increased awareness about health care careers and opportunities
Early awareness about skills and education required to enter health care

Who needs to be involved?

ConneX
Skills Center
WDC
Local hospitals & clinics

Who should lead the effort?
ConneX & Skills Center

What type of resources would be needed?

Additional funds to expand promotional materials and website development, building on existing materials (instead of recreating original material) like those developed by Tacoma/Pierce County WDC

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal #1: To increase student and adult awareness about the broad array of health care careers

Action #1B

Coordination of health care outreach services within the Tri-County region

- **Identify and track programs that conduct outreach activities about health care careers to K-14**
- **Coordinate outreach efforts to schools, career/job fairs, field trips, etc.**
- **Coordinate quarterly meetings for providers to share information and coordinate efforts**
- **Expand outreach programs to adult populations and adult/dislocated workforce programs**

Desired Outcome/Results

Increased awareness of and interest in the wide array of health care careers in the Tri-County area
 Coordination of outreach efforts to maximize reach and awareness

Who needs to be involved?

AHEC	ConneX
Heritage College	GEAR UP
YVCC	WSU
Skills Center	WDC
K-12 School System	
Local hospitals & clinics	

What type of resources would be needed?

Funding for staff to coordinate programs that provide services

Who should lead the effort?

Tri-County Workforce Council

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal #2:

Increase the number of students and adults prepared to enter health care fields

Action Plan 2A:

Implement the Yakima Valley Community College Allied Health Core Curriculum of courses that are common to allied health programs and that lead to certificates and degrees in nursing, pharmacy technician, medical interpreter, billing and coding, medical assisting and surgical technology. Target implementation for Fall 2003 term.

- **Confirm curriculum with employers**
- **Find temporary lab space for 1 year**
- **Find funding for one additional faculty (approx. \$70,0000)**
- **Work with employers to obtain access to specialized equipment required to teach courses**

Desired Outcome/Results

The allied health core curriculum program is fully functional
 Core Curriculum has temporary space to operate in 2003-2004
 Have funding to hire additional faculty

Who needs to be involved?

YVCC
 Regional Health Care Employers
 Workforce Development Council

Who should lead the effort?

YVCC

What type of resources would be needed?

Lab space and equipment or use of employer facilities
 Funding for faculty

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal #2:

Increase the number of students and adults prepared to enter health care fields

Action Plan 2B:

Using the career ladder skills and prerequisites from the Resource Library (Goal #1 Action), identify regional programs that prepare students to enter healthcare fields.

Specifically:

- **Identify the gaps in the current programs; develop plans to increase capacity and identify what new programs may be needed,**
- **Educate counselors and teachers about prerequisites and programs that prepare students to enter health care fields, and**
- **Leverage outreach efforts to connect students with the most appropriate preparatory program.**

Desired Outcome/Results

Students will be connected with the most appropriate preparatory program
 Gaps in programs will be identified and potentially filled
 Counselors and teachers will be educated about the programs available and will be better equipped to inform students

Who needs to be involved?

Workforce Development Council
 Skills Center
 Consortium of Outreach Programs (Action 1B)

Who should lead the effort?

Workforce Development Council

What type of resources would be needed?

Funding for staff (Same staff that would assist with Actions 1A & 1B) to identify preparatory programs

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal #3:

Enhance the local ability to grow our own health care workers by increasing access to, and affordability and capacity of local education and training programs

Action Plan 3A:

Develop and coordinate apprenticeship programs with health care employers that allow students to study and earn wages. Registered apprenticeships are an effective education alternative that accelerates the learning process through on-the-job training coupled with supplemental classroom instruction. Effort would require:

- **Establishment of a health care apprenticeship program in the Tri-County area**
- **Marketing to employers**
- **Resources to reach the people (customer)**
- **Mentoring and tutoring support**
- **Individual financial assistance**
- **Access to supports (i.e. childcare)**

Desired Outcome/Results

A partnership with employers will be established to meet the needs of and reach the disenfranchised
 A reliable workforce will be created for employers

Who needs to be involved?

Employers
 WorkSource

Who should lead the effort?

WorkSource

What type of resources would be needed?

Initial funding to establish the apprenticeship program (could be a short-term project/contract)

Ongoing coordination and support (match by employers) to sustain the program. (could be a part of the responsibilities of a dedicated WDC health care staff)

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal #3:

Enhance the local ability to grow our own health care workers by increasing access to, and affordability and capacity of local education and training programs

Action Plan 3B:

- **Enhance access and the capacity of education programs by increasing distance learning capacity.**
 - **Identify and prioritize a set of on-line and distance learning options for the Tri-County area.**
 - **Work with Oregon & Washington education and training institutions to develop modular training that allows health care personnel to complete training in incremental steps leading to recognized promotions and wage increases.**
 - **Enhance online or distance learning opportunities for people to advance within their existing career path (e.g. certified LPNs are able to take courses at their own convenience towards becoming an RN).**

Desired Outcome/Results

Increased access to health care education

Who needs to be involved?

Employers
 Educators
 Distance learning coordinators
 Workforce Development Council

Who should lead the effort?

Educators and employers

What type of resources would be needed?

A short-term project lead by the WDC (in cooperation with YVCC, Heritage College and employers) to identify specific distance learning opportunities.

Implementation of projects led by appropriate educational institution or employer.

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal #4

Increase the Tri-County region's ability to recruit and retain specialty occupations that may have a low number of annual openings yet are critical to operations and patient care

Action Plan 4A:

Establish a subcommittee representing health, education and other sectors utilizing health care professionals to identify and prioritize a top-ten list of specialist occupations needed by employers in the Tri-County region. Investigate models that would increase the recruitment and retention of these specialists including, but not limited to, loan repayment programs, advanced training, and workplace redesign efforts.

Desired Outcome/Results

A top-ten list of high demand occupations or a matrix showing each employer's needs and priorities

Who needs to be involved?

Health Care Employers (Hospitals, Clinics, Public Health, etc.)
 Education Programs
 Workforce Development Council

Who should lead the effort?

Workforce Development Council

What type of resources would be needed?

Funding from sources such as incumbent worker programs or Industries of the Future to provide resources for this short-term project

Tri-County Health Care Skills Panel
Short-Term Action Plan

Health Care Goal:

Increase the Tri-County region's ability to recruit and retain specialty occupations that may have a low number of annual openings yet are critical to operations and patient care

Action Plan 4B

Establish a WDC career specialist position who would be a resource for adults entering or advancing their health care career. Build on the model career specialist model being implemented in other regions (e.g. Tacoma/Piece County). This person would rotate among regional employers and education programs and help employers to connect to advanced training outside the region.

Desired Outcome/Results

A developed, collaborative career specialist model with funding to support it

Who needs to be involved?

Health Care Employers (Hospitals, Clinics, Public Health, etc.)
 Education Programs
 Workforce Development Council

Who should lead the effort?

Workforce Development Council

What type of resources would be needed?

Funding from sources such as adult or incumbent worker programs or Industries of the Future to provide resources for a full time position



For more information about the Tri-County Workforce Council,
Visit www.co.yakima.wa.us/e&T or phone 509-574-1950