

Healthcare Sector

Sector Strategy Update: June 2024

Prepared by the SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Multi-Employer Training and Education Fund (“The Training Fund” or “TF”)

Please describe the greatest workforce needs facing your sector, with a focus on needs that career connected learning strategies can help to address.

Shortage of Healthcare Professionals: Washington, like many regions across the United States, experiences shortages of healthcare professionals in various fields, including nursing, primary care physicians, mental and behavioral health providers, and allied health professions such as medical assistants and dental hygienists. Career-connected learning Explore and Launch programs can help attract and prepare individuals for these professions by providing early exposure to healthcare careers, hands-on training, and mentorship opportunities, culminating in Career Launch programs that fill job openings with trained professionals. Entry level positions, especially those that are unionized, often come with robust educational training benefits that allow for upward mobility and career pathway opportunities within the healthcare system.

Rural and Underserved Communities: Rural and underserved communities in Washington face greater struggles to access adequate healthcare services due to workforce shortages. Career-connected learning programs can encourage students from these communities pursue healthcare careers by offering specialized training, scholarships, and incentives for practicing in rural areas. By cultivating a pipeline of healthcare professionals with ties to these communities, career-connected learning can help address disparities in access to care.

Diversity and Cultural Competency: Achieving a diverse healthcare workforce that reflects the demographics of Washington's population is essential for providing culturally competent care. Career-connected learning strategies can promote diversity in the healthcare workforce by reaching out to underrepresented minority students, providing support services, and offering opportunities for mentorship and a pathway into healthcare occupations.

Technological Advancements: The healthcare sector is rapidly evolving with advancements in technology, such as telemedicine, electronic health records (EHR), and artificial intelligence (AI). By connecting with employers, career-connected learning programs can identify and incorporate training on in-demand healthcare technologies to prepare students for the modern healthcare landscape. By offering hands-on experience with emerging technologies and digital health tools, career-connected learning can ensure that future healthcare professionals are equipped with the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly digital environment. However, training needs to be geographically focused to fit the needs of the students in Washington's diverse communities.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Effective healthcare delivery often requires collaboration among professionals from different disciplines, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, behavioral health occupations, and allied health professionals. Career-connected learning strategies can facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration by providing opportunities for students from various healthcare disciplines to work together on projects, simulations, and clinical experiences. Expansion of Explore and Prep programs offer more options to start exposure with an interdisciplinary focus at an early age and bridge to Launch opportunities, which are more occupation specific.

Lifelong Learning and Professional Development: Healthcare is a dynamic field that requires lifelong learning and ongoing professional development to stay current with best practices and advancements. Career-connected learning programs can promote a culture of lifelong learning by continuing education

opportunities, mentorship programs, and pathways for career advancement. By supporting the ongoing development of healthcare professionals, career-connected learning can help address workforce needs and ensure high-quality care for patients in Washington State.

In summary, career-connected learning strategies have the potential to address the greatest workforce needs facing the healthcare sector in Washington by attracting individuals into healthcare careers, promoting diversity and cultural competency, preparing students for technological advancements, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and supporting lifelong learning to create a pathway into higher level positions and salaries. By investing in career-connected learning programs, stakeholders can help build a skilled and diverse healthcare workforce that meets the evolving needs of communities across the state.

Between now and June of 2025, what are your sector’s 3-6 occupations that are highest-priority for building supportive career connected learning pathways? Please focus on occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

- Medical Assistant (MA)
- Nursing Assistant (NAC/CNA) into Nursing Pathway
- Behavioral Health (BHT/PC/SUDP)
- Dental Assistant

For each of the occupations identified above, please provide the information below to help inform pathway development efforts and investments.

<p>Occupation: Medical Assistant (MA) (SOC code: 319092)</p>	<p>Sub-sector: Allied Health</p>
<p>Average wage: Average annual salary: \$52,272 Average hourly wage: \$25.13 Source: https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/learn-about-an-occupation#/details</p>	
<p>Which skills/competencies do employers use as a benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Perceptiveness ● Active Listening ● Speaking to convey information effectively ● Reading Comprehension ● Critical Thinking ● Monitoring ● Service Orientation ● Writing ● Active Learning ● Instructing ● Learning Strategies ● Complex Problem Solving ● Judgment and Decision Making ● Time Management 	<p>Which credentials do employers cite as a valuable benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Medical Assistant Certification Exam, leading to the Medical Assisting Certification, obtained through the Washington State Department of Health is required for this occupation.

Please describe possible career progression opportunities for this occupation:

Medical Assistant to Phlebotomist with the potential to build out a pathway into Nursing or Physician Assistant. This pathway has been explored in the past but requires additional work to support barriers and solutions to help support pathway opportunities.

Please share the data, employer feedback, and/or Regional Network feedback that helped you identify this as a high-priority occupation:

Washington labor market data indicates the need for almost 2,000 more medical assistants (MAs) by 2031. [WA Sentinel Network](#) data shows that acute care hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) list medical assistants among their top 10 occupations experiencing long vacancies. [Employment Security Department](#) data lists MAs as an “in demand” occupation in all Washington Counties.

The Mid-Columbia and Northwest regions have identified MA as a high priority occupation via career fairs and community/employer outreach. All regions have been engaged in pathway discussions for MAs due to the high need, with primary focus on training for post-secondary students in the Northwest Region.

In response to the high need for MAs, the Health Care Apprenticeship Consortium, a Washington Registered JATC staffed by the Training Fund, launched MAs as one of their first apprenticeship programs. The MA apprenticeship continues to be in high demand, with at least five cohorts of 20 students scheduled per year. Training Fund staff continue to receive feedback from employers who identify this occupation as a high need in delivering clinical care. Other apprenticeship programs such as CHAS and Washington Association of Community Health offer apprenticeship programs for this occupation.

The need for more MAs is sufficiently high that partners, the Training Fund, college partners, and several skill centers across the state are in early stages of planning how to implement and expand apprenticeships to the high school settings over the next two years.

In May 2024, the training fund met with all Regions and agreed to partner with ESD105, ESD123, ESD113, ESD121, EDS189 to collaborate in building programs for MAs.

Please describe the top barriers employers have identified to hiring for this occupation:

1. Demand outpacing incoming MAs due to increasing demand for primary care services and pressure to reduce healthcare costs by shifting tasks to lower-cost providers. The UW Center for Health Workforce Studies noted in 2019 that the demand for MAs was sufficiently high that many providers turned to apprenticeships to fill their needs.
2. A lack of MAs who are sufficiently trained to meet the specific needs of employers, despite many training programs.
3. High turnover, especially among MAs of color, according to interviews conducted by UW Center for Health Workforce Studies.
4. Lower wages and fewer career pathway options than for some other healthcare occupations.
5. Credentialing requirements – Washington may be the only state that requires certification for MAs.

Between now and June of 2025, where is there regional momentum to support pathway development in this occupation?

1. **Key momentum factors:** The regions listed for TF program expansion result from discussions with employers interested in implementing MA apprenticeship programs and resources received through the WJI grant and L&I funding. The TF is committed to helping the regions served by ESD105, ESD123, ESD113, ESD121, ESD 189 apply for funding and support expansion efforts to build MA programs.
2. **High-potential opportunities:** Yakima Valley, New Market, Tri Tech and other Skill Centers are

looking to incorporate “college in the high school” MA apprenticeships with college partners and the Training Fund to address the gap. Additional skill centers are also looking to expand MA programming.

3. *Is supporting those high-potential opportunities a **shared priority** across SL and RN? Yes, Mid-Columbia and Northwest in particular.*

Occupation: Nursing Assistant (NAC) – Nursing pathway (SOC code: 311131)	Sub-sector: Allied Health into Nursing
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Average wage:
Average annual salary: \$41,326
Average hourly wage: \$19.87
Source: <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/learn-about-an-occupation#/details>

<p>Which skills/competencies do employers use as a benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Orientation – people skills • Active Listening • Social Perceptiveness • Monitoring • Coordination • Critical Thinking • Reading Comprehension • Speaking • Active Learning • Judgment and Decision Making 	<p>Which credentials do employers cite as a valuable benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCSBN NNAAP CNA Exam written and hands-on skills sections. • Additional certifications and licensures, including passing the NCLEX exam to advance along the career pathway into nursing and specialty nursing.
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Please describe possible career progression opportunities for this occupation:

Nursing Assistant Certified to Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse to Nurse Practitioner and other specialty nursing opportunities. This occupation is high demand with employers often supporting robust education benefits that can help NA-Cs advance in educational pathways into nursing occupations. There are continued opportunities to expand out mid and high wage-earning potentials in these occupations.

Please share the data, employer feedback, and/or Regional Network feedback that helped you identify this as a high-priority occupation:

The need for nurses is well documented and a frequent topic in healthcare workforce discussions and in the media. However, the need for certified nursing assistants is less well known. [WA Sentinel Network](#) data for the last 6 months ranks Nursing Assistant among the top 5 occupations that experience long vacancies in 8 of the state’s 9 Accountable Health Communities (ACHs). Nursing Assistant was also reported to be among the 5 occupations with the highest turnover in all 9 ACHs in the same period. The [Washington Employment Security](#) Department (ESD) lists Nursing Assistant as being “in demand” in all counties except Spokane, where the demand is “balanced.” The need is so high, it is not being fully met by existing programs, which is why the Health Care Apprenticeship Consortium JATC staffed by the Training Fund developed both recognized a NA-C Apprenticeship Prep program and an Introduction to Healthcare Apprenticeship Program (IHAP) to recruit individuals into NA-C programs and occupations. More than 230 individuals have entered the NA-C program since summer 2022, when the first cohort launched. The demand for NA-Cs in long term care facilities is so high that, in 2023, the legislature funded a \$1 million project for SEIU775 in partnership with the Training Fund to pilot the NA-C

Apprenticeship Prep program in nursing homes to better prepare staff and increase retention.

NA-C programs are an excellent Launch opportunity as they can lead into nursing pathways with additional educational programming along the way. In fact, many Washington community and technical colleges prefer nursing program applicants to have NA-C experience. The State Workforce Training Board is currently working on developing an NA-C to LPN apprenticeship pathway program.

Mid-Columbia, Northwest, and South Central regions have identified NA-C as a high priority occupation via career fairs and community/employer outreach. In South Central, SEIU775 has identified the need to place more NA-Cs into long-term care facilities as a critical need and is pursuing approval for an NA-C Pre-Apprenticeship and possible Apprenticeship. In Mid-Columbia, partners have twice come together to apply for Program Builder funding to implement the Training Fund's IHAP 1, which feeds into NA-C programs. Although they have been unsuccessful to date, they continue to be interested in approaches to expand NA-C programming into their region.

In May 2024, the training fund met with all Regions and agreed to partner with ESD105, ESD123, ESD113, ESD121, ESD189 to collaborate on building IHAP 1 and N-C programs.

Please describe the top barriers employers have identified to hiring for this occupation:

1. Insufficient training/limited experience in medical settings, since this is an entry-level job for many healthcare workers
2. Long term care facilities that are under sanction can't provide clinical opportunities, which makes both recruitment and onboarding challenging for these employers
3. High turnover, especially in long term care settings
4. Socio economic barriers to accessing education and training
5. Low wages and challenging work environments
6. Lack of awareness of training opportunities for advancement/understanding of potential career "lattices"
7. Credentialing hoops and regulatory limitations, including long delays in scheduling certification testing

Please describe the type of programs or approaches employers have found helpful in hiring for this occupation:

Washington healthcare employers hire NA-Cs from a variety of programs, including post-secondary programs offered by community and technical colleges, the Training Fund's NA-C Apprenticeship Prep program, private training organizations, and healthcare facilities. Many employers partner with training programs to provide clinical opportunities and hire program graduates directly. Many nursing homes and long-term care facilities train their own NA-Cs, which are hired away by hospital systems that offer higher wages or better working conditions for experienced NA-Cs, resulting in high turnover and the need to constantly train new NA-Cs. The Intermediary will have the opportunity to continue to gather employer feedback regarding their preferred approaches for recruiting NA-Cs over the next year. Training Fund data on NA-C placements and employer hiring practices over the next few months will provide additional insights into the types of programs and approaches employers have found most helpful in hiring NA-Cs. This is an area for continued discussion with employers.

Between now and June of 2025, where is there regional momentum to support pathway development in this occupation?

- South Central
 - *Key momentum factors:* SEIU775 has identified NA-C placement needs
 - *High-potential opportunities:* Nursing Pathway opportunities in development
 - *Shared priority?* Yes
- Mid-Columbia and Snohomish County
 - *Key momentum factors:* Ongoing partner interest in implementing IHAP 1 and NA-C

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o programs o <i>High-potential opportunities:</i> Implementation of IHAP 1 and the NA-C apprenticeship prep program in the region o <i>Shared priority?</i> Yes

<p>Occupation: Behavioral Health Pathway - Behavioral Health Technician (Soc Code: 292053)/Peer Counselor (U.S. DOL does not have an occupational code for this occupation)/Substance Use Disorder Professional (21-1011.00)</p>	<p>Sub-sector: Behavioral Health</p>
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<p>Average wage: Behavioral Health Technician – \$18.82/hr. Peer Counselor - \$21/hour Substance Use Disorder Professional - \$24.87/hr. Source: Zip Recruiter</p>
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<p>Which skills/competencies do employers use as a benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <p>Skills vary by occupation, but generally consist of helping individuals address and overcome behavioral health issues including chemical dependencies. Here are some of the skills required for these occupations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active Listening ● Speaking ● Critical Thinking ● Social Perceptiveness ● Monitoring ● Reading Comprehension ● Writing ● Judgment and Decision Making ● Persuasion ● Service Orientation ● Active Learning ● Complex Problem Solving ● Coordination ● Instructing ● Learning Strategies ● Negotiation ● Systems Analysis ● Systems Evaluation ● Management of Personnel Resources ● Time Management 	<p>Which credentials do employers cite as a valuable benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Behavioral Health Technician – Nursing Assistant Certification (NA-C) ● Peer Counselor – passage of the Washington State Health Care Authority Certified Peer Counselor test ● SUDP - National Certified Addiction Counselor Level I (NCAC I) certification exam upon program completion, which permits Washington SUDP certification
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<p>Please describe possible career progression opportunities for this occupation:</p> <p>Behavioral Health Technician to Peer Counselor or Behavioral Health Technician to Substance Use</p>

Disorder Professional to Social Worker to-Rehab Counselor to Psychologist or Psychiatrist

Please share the data, employer feedback, and/or Regional Network feedback that helped you identify this as a high-priority occupation:

The need for trained behavioral health workers has been increasing in recent years, especially among behavioral health facilities in both urban and rural areas. Employment Security Department data list Behavioral health technician as an “in demand” occupation, but does not provide data on Peer Counsellors and Substance Use Disorder Professionals. According to the [WA Sentinel Network](#) data, all 9 Washington Accountable Communities of Health (ACH) list mental health counselor occupations, a possible career path for behavioral health workers, as one of their top 10 longest vacancies to fill. The rural Better Health Together and Olympic ACH also list SUDP among their top 10 longest vacancies.

Mid-Columbia, Northwest, King & Pierce, and South Central regions have all identified SUDP as a priority occupation for Career Connected Learning. Mid-Columbia started a Teach the Teacher program in March in partnership with a local behavioral health provider, Kadlec Resource Services.

Training Fund employer partners along with hospital systems identified the 3 behavioral health occupations described in this section as a top priority, prompting the Training Fund to develop apprenticeships for all 3, designed along a career path.

Please describe the top barriers employers have identified to hiring for this occupation:

1. Relatively few training programs available
2. Retention, turnover and burnout
3. Socio economic barriers limiting access to training for those with lived experience
4. Lower wages for some occupations within this group
5. Lack of awareness of the training opportunities and of the career pathways that do exist
6. Challenges with background checks for those with lived experience, delays in licensing for SUDP-T credential, and challenges with the long timelines for NA-C exams for BHTs
7. Lack of sufficiently diverse hiring pool reflective of the communities served

Please describe the type of programs or approaches employers have found helpful in hiring for this occupation:

- **Apprenticeship** – Employers are partnering with the TF in Registered Apprenticeships in Behavioral Health, SUDP and Peer Counselor apprenticeships to fill the hiring gaps. The Training Fund’s 2-year SUDP apprenticeship program has been exceptionally well received by employers. The Training Fund launched the program in 2022, anticipating that 4 cohorts would be run over a 2-year period. To date, 7 cohorts have been launched with more planned in 2024. SUDPs are in especially high demand in behavioral health organizations since they can charge for these occupations as soon as they are licensed while still in the apprenticeship program. This makes the SUDP apprenticeship more financially viable for the employer.
- **Post-secondary programs** - Washington’s growing behavioral health crisis necessitates the development of additional programs to meet community needs.

Between now and June of 2025, where is there regional momentum to support pathway development in this occupation?

1. **Key momentum factors:** behavioral health apprenticeships are being offered in 6 of the regions, increasing the potential for expansion.
2. **High-potential opportunities:** Spokane Falls Community College, Olympic College, Highline, Lake Washington, Edmonds, Whatcom, Yakima Valley and Renton are a number of post-secondary programs that have behavioral health programs that could be partnered with to expand career connected learning opportunities. Demand still is not met with existing programs. Puget Sound Skills

Center is looking into supporting a two-year “college in the high school” program next year and other colleges are exploring opportunities for expansion in this area. The Sector Intermediary is exploring convening these and other partners to help expand programs across the state. The Training Fund is looking at opportunities to expand these apprenticeships throughout the state, as well. Employers from across the state and are involved in efforts to expand behavioral health occupations and address staffing shortfalls

3. **Shared priority?** Yes. employers and college partners are interested in expanding pathway opportunities in behavioral health.

Occupation: Dental Assistant (Soc Code: 319091)	Sub-sector: Dental
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Average wage: \$46,626 annual
 Average annual salary: \$53,473
 Average hourly wage: \$25.71
Source: <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/learn-about-an-occupation#/details>

<p>Which skills/competencies do employers use as a benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare patient • Sterilize or disinfect instruments, • Set up instrument trays, • Prepare materials, • Assist dentist during dental procedures. • Record treatment information in patient records. • Assist dentist in management of medical or dental emergencies. • Order and monitor dental supplies and equipment inventory. • Expose dental diagnostic x-rays. 	<p>Which credentials do employers cite as a valuable benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of completion of seven clock hours of AIDS education and training • BLS Training • WA Certified Dental Assistant • EFDA and other certifications to expand functions of Dental Assistants • CPR Certification
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Please describe possible career progression opportunities for this occupation:

Dental Assistant to Dental Hygienist to Orthodontist to Oral Surgeon

Please share the data, employer feedback, and/or Regional Network feedback that helped you identify this as a high-priority occupation:

Dental assistant and dental hygienist have consistently been the two occupations taking longest to fill by dental clinics and offices according to <https://wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings/facility/> data. The Employment Security Department lists the occupation as “in demand”. U.S. BLS data indicates average total annual opening of 3,904 thru 2032.

Mid-Columbia, Northwest, and King and Pierce regions have identified Dental Assistant as a priority occupation for Career Connected Learning. The Sector Intermediary has attended monthly meetings with Northsound Accountable Community of Health (ACH) to discuss efforts to solve the Dental Assistant training and job placement issue. The Training Fund has been asked to partner with NeighborCare to start a Dental Assistant training program, and is looking at launching this in the Northwest and North Central Regions and then replicating the programs throughout the state.

Please describe the top barriers employers have identified to hiring for this occupation:

1. Limited training options to meet the demand
2. Retention
3. Low wages
4. Lack Awareness of training opportunities when they exist
5. Community partners feel that resources are not evenly allocated

Please describe the type of programs or approaches employers have found helpful in hiring for this occupation:

1. **Pre-Apprenticeship:** There is the opportunity to assist Northsound Accountable Community of Health (ACH) create Apprenticeship Prep and Apprenticeship programs for this occupation. The Intermediary is meeting with Northsound to provide information about need, funding, and opportunity to support Apprenticeship Prep work that is currently being offered by the Training Fund.
2. **Apprenticeship:** Washington Association of Community Health has a Dental Assistant 12-month training program
3. **Career Launch Programs:** N/A

For each region below, which CCW Career Explore, Prep, and Launch programs and post-secondary programs currently exist to support this occupation?

In addition to the programs listed on the combined table below, CHAS Health Centers is taking applications for summer 2024 and is registered to provide a dental assistant apprenticeship program in Adams, Asotin, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Whitman counties, and Washington Association for Community Health is registered to provide a dental assistants apprenticeship statewide.

Between now and June of 2025, where is there regional momentum to support pathway development in this occupation?

1. **Key momentum factors:** In addition to the Training Fund receiving inquiries about the possibility of addressing the need for Dental Assistant training, the WJI funded Healthcare Talent Pipeline Development Sector Partnership also prioritized dental assistant in SW Washington. There may be opportunities to work together to address training needs for this occupation.
2. **High-potential opportunities to support pathway development:** See item 1 above.
3. **Is supporting those high-potential opportunities a shared priority across SL and RN?** TBD

For each region below, which workforce education & training programs are effectively meeting employer needs, or could effectively meet their needs with adjustment or expanded capacity? Where relevant, please color code responses to reflect their relevance to specific occupations.

Please provide your color-coding key below:

Medical Assistant Yellow
Nursing Assistant Grey
Behavioral Health No Color
Dental Assistant Blue

NOTE: In addition to the program listed below, MA apprenticeship is offered by CHAS Health in Adams, Asotin, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Latah, Spokane, Stevens, Nez Perce, and Whitman Counties and by Washington Association for Community Health statewide. In addition to the programs listed below, most colleges and variety of high schools, private training organizations, and nursing homes offer NA-C training. A full list of programs that are certified or pending certification are available

at <https://nursing.wa.gov/education/nursing-assistant-training/nursing-assistant-training-programs>. With so many programs it would take additional research to know which are most effective at meeting employer needs.

Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Market Skills Center, Training Fund Apprenticeships, MA Post Secondary Programs • Training Fund NA-C Program Expansion • Training Fund Behavioral Health Apprenticeships
East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington State University Stevens County Health Mentorship Program, WSU Healthcare Career Prep (Stevens), Training Fund MA apprenticeship expansion • WSU Stevens County Health Mentorship Program, Training Fund NA-C Program Expansion, WABS Nursing Pathway, Career Launch Spokane • Training Fund Behavioral Health Apprenticeships, Spokane Community Falls SUDP, WSU Health Mentorship Program • Spokane Falls College, Carrington
King & Pierce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WABS Health Industry Leadership Table Health Career Explore, WABS Interactive Job Shadows, Training Fund Apprenticeship and Expansion • Training Fund NA-C Program Expansion, WABS Nursing Pathway, Next Move Nursing Internship, Tacoma Healthcare Career Academy • Training Fund Behavioral Health Apprenticeships, WABS Industry Leadership Table, WABS Interactive Job Shadows • Seattle Central Dental Assistant Program, Pima Medical
Mid-Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Fund MA Expansion • Training Fund NA- Program Expansion, WSU/Tri Cities Nursing Bridge Program • Training Fund Behavioral Health Apprenticeships Expansion
North Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation for Youth Resiliency, Training Fund MA Apprenticeship, New Health Programs, MA Apprenticeships-Stevens, Whitman, Spokane • Training Fund NA-C Expansion
Northwest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WABS Leadership Table, Snolsle Skills Center, New Health Programs, MA Programs • WABS Leadership Table, Snolsle Skills Center • WABS Industry Leadership Table, Whatcom Community Behavioral Health Center, Training Fund Behavioral Health Apprenticeships • Skagit Valley College
South Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pierce County for Arts and Tech Cert MA Program • Elite Dental, Clark College
Southwest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Fund Behavioral Health Apprenticeship
West Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jefferson Healthcare Career Explore and Prep, Goodwill Industries STEM • Whatcom Nursing Internship

What is needed to increase participation of BIPOC students in your sector's high priority occupations? To increase participation of students from rural areas? Which programs are doing this well?

To increase BIPOC student participation in and awareness of CCL, the Training Fund is partnering with the BIPOC Health Career Ecosystem and Build 2 Learn to understand and help solve programmatic gaps and increase BIPOC student involvement. The BIPOC Health Ecosystem has expressed interest in building a comprehensive healthcare program database to identify programs that can potentially work with these organizations. The TF is in conversation with CCW as to how that might be supported since programs that aren't CCW endorsed need to add themselves. The Training Fund will be inviting both organizations to speak at and participate in quarterly roundtable discussions with employers, stakeholders, and the Regional networks.

The intermediary is planning on being scheduled to speak at various high schools in King and Pierce Counties to CCW and TF programs. We will work with BIPOC Career Ecosystem and new contacts directly within the County School districts to select schools with diverse populations.

Replication of successful programs and funding is essential to successfully increase BIPOC student participation in training for high priority healthcare occupations. The sector intermediary is working to replicate the Training Fund's Introduction to Healthcare Apprenticeships Program (IHAP 1), which is designed specifically to recruit BIPOC students into healthcare pathways. IHAP 1 is a three-week program that teaches work readiness and medical terminology and provides a foundational knowledge for job placement into entry level healthcare jobs for BIPOC and underserved communities. ESD123 and ESD113 are interested in replicating the program in rural areas and CCW program builder support would go a long way toward expanding IHAP. The intermediary also continues to partner with ESD123 and ESD113 to attempt to roll out programs like a Career Networking event and Summer Academies.

Stem Like Me and Summer Academies in the Yakima Region are having success increasing BIPOC participation in rural areas. A nursing launch program was recently developed in the Tri-cities area and a new high school is being built in the Tri-cities that will include a focus on healthcare academic tracks. The intermediary is learning more about these opportunities and their potential for expansion and replication.

To learn more about how to engage underserved communities, the intermediary participated in planning committees for the HILT/SCIH and the Long-Term Care Initiative and attended the ECHO Tour, Sno-isle Skill Center Career for high school students in King and Snohomish County, and a Speed Networking event in Franklin County that provides inventive way to bring individuals in rural communities into healthcare. The Intermediary is sharing these as examples that can be rolled out in other smaller communities, with sufficient funding. ESD113, 189, 105 have expressed a strong interest in replicating or creating:

1. IHAP-NAC programs
2. Career Fairs
3. Quarterly Roundtable Discussions
4. Program Showcase participation

The Intermediary is in meetings with the Regional Networks to confirm which programs exist, which need to be created, and which need to funding to continue.

One challenge with reaching all parts of the state is there is continued opportunity to share in more real time with some Regional Networks. Having access to current data from all Regional Networks would help the intermediary better target efforts to build more career connected learning opportunities. A streamlined information sharing process with regular sharing deadlines needs to be implemented. CCW assistance is needed to strengthen connectivity between the RN and SI roles to expand and support Career Connected Learning opportunities for all Washington youth. The intermediary feels confident this can change and we can work together to start building on existing opportunities and creating new ones.

What overarching strategies do you recommend to support pathway development for the highest-priority occupations in your sector?

The primary strategy should be to invest in Career Launch programs targeting the entry-level, high-demand healthcare occupations identified in this strategy update: Certified Nursing Assistants/Home Care Aids, Medical Assistants, Dental Assistants, Behavior Health Technicians, Peer Counselors, and Substance Use Disorder Professionals. Focusing on the Explore and Prep programs that lead to Launch is also a critical need, because these programs can counteract recent negative storylines about healthcare occupations for younger audiences.

Strategies for NA-C and nursing pathways

- Support ESD112 efforts to create an NAC program with Mason General. Partnership work to support this initiative is underway.
- Partner with ESD112 to plan a Healthcare Program Builder proposal this fall.
- Partner with ESD123 to support the WSU Nursing Bridge Program and the launch of their two new high schools which will have healthcare pathway programs
- Meet with all regions to discuss the possibility of implementing IHAP 1 by partnering with the TF or doing a variation of the program on their own.

Strategies for MA, Behavioral Health, and Dental Assisting

- Continue to meet with ESD189 to support the Skagit Valley College career fair event and pathway for MA and Whatcom County College MA and NAC pathway opportunities
- Meet with all registered apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs to gather information and foster potential expansion and replication of these programs.
- Work with ESD113 and Clover Park College to support their new MA program and help bolster employer support and possible paid internships
- Work with Regional Network Director for King and Pierce County to explore Behavioral Health opportunities along with Career Tours (Working with employers to tour healthcare facilities and expose students to careers in healthcare)
- Work with Southwest Washington's component of the WJI funded Healthcare Talent Pipeline Development Sector Partnership, Washington Association for Community Health, and CHAS Health Centers to learn more about dental assistant training and see if there are opportunities to align or leverage their work to expand CCL for this occupation.

Strategies for all occupations

- Engage with the ESDs that have been mentioned in this document to gather information to see if the Training Fund's Training Skills Centers will be appropriate avenues in their specific areas to train students in CLE leading to various pathway progressions and certification opportunities.
- Support the ECHO event in the fall 2024 for middle schoolers in Snohomish County in ESD189's region
- Leverage Training Fund convening of four round table discussions throughout the year with the Workforce Training Board, AHEC, and the Allied Health Center of Excellence as invited guests

to contribute to these discussions. These sectoral round table convenings provide a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and resource sharing, fostering a more holistic understanding of workforce needs and promoting the development of innovative solutions that address the complex challenges facing the healthcare industry. The intermediary, in addition to featuring existing programs during the bimonthly Program Showcase, will shift some of the focus to the Center for Excellence, AHEC, and employers to support networking, education, and partnering with the Regional Networks and other stakeholders who want to connect. By bringing together representatives from healthcare providers, educational institutions, government agencies, and community organizations.

- The sector intermediary will use the new Industry engagement function being rolled out by CCW to enhance the CCW brand identity and promote the benefits of career connected learning to attract stakeholders and increase interest and investment from employers, educational institutions, and community organizations for the healthcare sector.

Rural Strategy

Developing a comprehensive rural strategy is crucial to ensuring equitable access to training opportunities across diverse geographic regions. The Training Fund is partnering with workforce development organizations, CCW, and Regional Networks to develop a concrete implementable strategy to address the challenges of rural communities. The Training Fund plans to attend the Workforce yearly meeting at the end of June to map out a plan to implement programs that will succeed in rural communities. A primary focus will be expanding IHAP, supporting Skill Center expansion work as Rural Partners are strongly engaged in these, and program expansion to help address Rural opportunities.

DEI Strategy

Incorporating principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into every facet of program development and policymaking is imperative. The strategy is to continue to work with BIPOC Health Career Ecosystem and Build 2 Learn as described above.

The sector intermediary needs support from CCW to expand DEI work. Possible ways CCW could assist include conducting a needs assessment and mapping project for community engagement, providing guidance on inclusive policy and program development, training and capacity building and monitoring for accountability. By integrating these approaches, we can contribute to building more equitable and inclusive systems in both healthcare and education.

Strategy to expand apprenticeship

The strategy is to make the process of developing apprenticeships more transparent. The Sector intermediary is engaging stakeholders that include, Regional Network Leaders, workforce groups and other partners for focused CL expansion. Round table discussions will help explore how to best support expansion of apprenticeship in these focused areas, while highlighting employer/labor meetings when applicable. Employer and labor discussions will continue to highlight CL as a solution to workforce needs. The SI with TF partnership is mapping out a process to help any organization who wants to start an apprentice program by providing resources and support in the following categories:

- Apprenticeship development inquiry (employer)
- Connect with L&I Apprenticeship Consultant [Offer a Registered Apprenticeship \(wa.gov\)](https://www.wa.gov)
- Connect with Regional Networks and Career Connect Learning Coordinators to understand regional employer needs [Regional Networks & CCL Coordinators | Career Connect Washington](#)
- Explore funding opportunities (such as apprenticeship) and the requirements to apply [Apply for Grant Funding | Career Connect Washington](#)
- Connect with Centers of Excellence in your sector to understand training resources [Washington State Centers of Excellence \(coewa.com\)](https://www.coewa.com)

To implement these strategies, the intermediary requests additional CCW support to strengthen connectivity among the various partners to help engage the more reluctant Regional Networks to work more collaboratively to achieve CCW goals. This work is complex and no one party can do it without strong best in class relationships.

Between now and June of 2025, how will you prioritize your time, attention, and resources as a sector leader to support regional pathway development and advance the recommendations above? What specific actions will you take?

To implement the strategies outlined above, the sector intermediary will prioritize time, attention and resources as follows.

Strategies for NA-C and nursing pathways

The intermediary will focus on playing a support role to promote the adoption and expansion of activities that are already underway to bring new IHAP 1 and NA-C programs to implementation. The intermediary will focus on expanding resources for these programs through Program Builder grant proposals and other funding opportunities. The first focus will be to engage with projects already underway and the 2nd will be to work with the remaining ESDs to promote new opportunities. The priority will be to bring new CCL programs to fruition in the next year, including focusing on Skill Center involvement throughout the state to incorporate NA-C programs.

Strategies for MA, Behavioral Health, and Dental Assisting

Like the NA-C/Nursing pathways strategy, the sector intermediary will prioritize supporting efforts that have recently begun to take hold, rather than starting from scratch. These Medical Assisting and Behavioral Health programs have the potential to become CCL endorsed, but need time and resources for implementation. The second priority will be to explore options to address the need for dental assistants. The sector intermediary will work to support the existing WACH program along with discussions with employers, college partners and stakeholders to help expand opportunities.

Strategies for all occupations

To support these strategies, the intermediary will focus on three types of activities:

- Information sharing through program showcases, a regular newsletter, apprenticeship how-to's, the Training Fund's roundtable discussions, and regional virtual and in person visits.
- Expanded employer engagement to promote CCL opportunities.
- Information gathering to better understand employer needs and how CCL programs can meet those needs.

Rural Strategy

The intermediary's priority will be leveraging the work of other Training Fund staff in this area to expand beyond Training Fund sponsored activities and increase support for CCL. A primary focus will be expanding the IHAP program because it can be tailored to fit the needs of rural communities and replicating programs that have been effective in rural areas.

DEI Strategy

The intermediary will focus energy and resources on working with CCW to develop the program map that the BIPOC Healthcare Ecosystems and Build 2 Learn have asked for and to continue to meet with these 2 groups to strengthen relationships and increase understanding.

Strategy to expand apprenticeship

Unlike many of the other projects, the intermediary is the lead and primary resource for this strategy. The intermediary will prioritize getting the tools and resources for this effort ready and will share them

through the activities listed above in the rural strategy, DEI strategy, and general strategies for all occupations.

The most valuable service the intermediary can provide in support of the overall healthcare strategy is building connections and promoting CCL. In many instances the intermediary will be playing a support role to bring work that is ongoing to fruition and to take current training efforts to the level of being endorsed as CCL. Recognizing that one person can only do so much, this approach allows the intermediary to leverage the skills and resources of others. The Training Fund is committed to actively supporting opportunities for partners to help expand apprenticeship. Team members will expand the intermediary's connectivity to support apprenticeship development. Workforce initiatives are complex and rely on partnership work and this will be a continued focus for strategic outreach and expansion in various settings ranging from employer/labor connections, meetings, convenings, round tables and show case opportunities. Through partnership the goal is to help increase opportunity for apprenticeship and other career connected learning.