

Why Workforce Development Boards Are Valuable Resources for Hospitals

Introduction

Conventional wisdom says **that when an organization is struggling to attract labor, it can solve the problem by offering higher wages. More workers will then enter the labor market. Suddenly, the labor shortage will be no more.**¹ This line of thinking was often valid in past years. However, today's workforce shortages in health care cannot be solved this easily.

Today's shortages are complicated and multi-faceted, with compounding issues that extend across the pipeline-development-through-employment continuum. The key issues include, but are not limited to, worker burnout and fatigue, intense industry competition resulting in rising wages, retirements, insufficient supply of trained individuals in the pipeline, faculty shortages, and lack of clinical training sites. Today's conditions have created severe and long-term shortages that cannot be solved by a single approach or strategy. Instead, they require innovative solutions — and new alliances and partners.

This article is intended to introduce hospitals to local workforce development boards, or WDBs for short. These entities are, for the most part, underutilized by hospitals today. This state of affairs is unfortunate because WDBs present hospitals with a golden opportunity for partnerships and problem-solving with an aim of reducing today's stubborn workforce supply dilemma.

“During the pandemic and its recovery period, it is important for hospitals to know about the WDB business services and engage with them to help support their workforce needs,” explained HASC HR and Education Services Vice President Teri Hollingsworth. “HASC has worked with several local WDB to secure funding to support the association's training initiatives. Our wider goal now is to share the many advantages that partnerships with WDBs can offer our member hospitals.”

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/20/briefing/labor-shortages-covid-wages.html>

What Are Workforce Development Boards?

The state's workforce development system consists of 49 local business-led workforce development boards, of which 14 are located in the HASC region (www.hasc.org/general-information/workforce-development-board-contact-information). These boards work with the state and its elected officials to oversee the delivery of workforce services relevant to specific areas and their residents and businesses.

Each local board is responsible for providing oversight of the federal **Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA)** landmark legislation that is designed to strengthen and improve the nation's public workforce system and help Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, navigate toward high-quality jobs and help employers hire and retain skilled workers. Even though they share this responsibility, each board has its own charter and unique mission.

Each local board shares a set of business services that are available to employers **at no cost**. These include:

- **Customized Recruiting / Career Fairs / Hiring Events** – Plan and host face-to-face career, hiring, and other customized recruiting events for specific industries and businesses.
- **On-the-Job Training (OJT)** – Assist employers in hiring and training new employees by subsidizing up to 75 percent of a new employee's wages for a period of time.
- **Human Resource Consulting Services** – Provide employers with confidential Human Resources support and advice on employment related issues and all areas of employer-employee relations.
- **Hiring Assistance** – Post available jobs openings on the CalJOBS online database, writing / reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks, recruiting and screening candidates, and more.
- **Paid Work Experience / Internships** – Provide job seekers with little-to-no work experience the opportunity to gain skills through hands-on learning at an employer worksite. The participant is compensated by the program, with no cost to the employer.
- **Shape Local Training** – Provide opportunities for hospitals to discuss their training needs in roundtable discussions with community colleges and other training providers. This helps ensure that training providers are developing trainings that support employers' workforce needs.
- **Funding Partnerships** – Provide opportunities for employers to participate as partners in specific projects funded by state and federal grants. This can enable

employers to receive higher levels of funding than other channels and access greater levels of support from the WDB.

- **Labor Market Information (LMI)** – Provide relocating or expanding employers with current and accurate labor market information regarding labor supply, wages, occupational projections, commuting patterns and the latest job figures.
- **Layoff Aversion** – Support at-risk employees in advance of layoffs and / or closure to assess the needs of the company and deliver solutions to address the risk factors to stay in business and retain a skilled workforce.
- **Rapid Response Services** – Assist employers / workers with resources that will assist exiting employees impacted by layoffs, business closures, and natural or other disasters. Provide on-site sessions to instruct on the process of applying for unemployment benefits, accessing programs that provide job search techniques, training opportunities and reemployment assistance.
- **Employment Training Panel Funding (ETP)** – Assist employers in strengthening their competitive edge in the economy by providing funds to partially offset the cost of necessary job skills training. This performance-based program provides funds to employers for trainees who successfully complete training and are retained in good-paying jobs.
- **Opportunity Zones** – Provide incentives to employers in economically-distressed communities that include preferential federal tax treatment or consideration for federal grants and programs.
- **New and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)** – Assist employers with creating customized training programs, including apprenticeship, to train new employees and upgrade the skill levels of current employees to enable businesses to remain competitive and promote from within.

Why Engage With Local WDBs?

WDBs are demand-driven, have local control of the **federal money that comes through state agencies and are intended to address the business and employment needs within a region**. Representation on the Workforce Boards includes many stakeholders and partners throughout the system, including business, labor, adult education, vocational rehabilitation, local education and training providers and economic and community development agencies. The WDBs are a place of universal access, serving both job seekers and employers, and they manage the alignment and coordination of employment and training services and programs.

Examples of Engagement Between WDBs and Hospitals

Example #1: SELACO WDB Helps Hospitals With Recruitment and Hiring Efforts

In 2004, the Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board (SELACO) began a partnership with a group of hospitals in Baldwin Park, Downey, Woodland Hills,

Hollywood, West L.A., and Harbor City to help increase recruitment and hiring for several job categories with a special focus on nursing. SELACO developed and implemented a plan to deploy staff from its business services department to supplement the hospitals' recruitment, screening and staffing efforts.

Following the launch of the partnership, the facilities saw a rapid increase in new hires. After learning about a Department of Labor grant opportunity for \$1.6 million over three years, SELACO applied and was awarded the grant. Funds from the grant were used to help expand SELACO's existing services to include additional Southern California hospitals. The funds were also used to develop an **Intern Immersion Program** for registered nurses, a 10-week training program that creates an individualized training plan to address skills gaps. SELACO's staff screened and enrolled eligible interns into the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program. OJT is a critical resource as it allows businesses to hire new employees and provide training in skilled positions. For each new hire enrolled in an OJT program, the employer is reimbursed up to 50 percent of the hourly wage.

Over the three-year grant period, the partnership was successful by multiple measures, resulting in 97 percent of nurses completing the program and 250 registered nurses hired.

Example #2: South Bay Workforce Investment Board Helps Hospitals Access Training Funds

The South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB) has assisted several hospitals in accessing California's Employment Training Panel (ETP), which provides funds to help upskill and further train existing staff. From helping hospitals complete applications to secure funds, to developing a customized training program, the SBWIB embraces comprehensive strategies to meet the needs of business for a skilled workforce, while creating opportunities for workers to prepare for and enter well-paid careers.

As hospitals grapple with increased demand for patient care, it is incumbent upon them to train and provide their workforce with new skills to meet emerging needs and demands. Understanding the importance of closing potential skills gaps, many hospitals have committed to retraining and upskilling their employees. This commitment comes with a price tag, of course. However, working with WDBs helps to minimize your costs.

How to Connect With Your local Workforce Development Board

During this critical time of workforce shortages, HASC encourages member hospitals to engage with their local WDBs. The local boards are uniquely positioned to access state and federal funding that can be used to support your organization's workforce initiatives. They are experienced professionals who you will learn to value as important members of your own workforce development team.

To help you locate your WDB, HASC has compiled a list of all boards in the HASC region:
[www.hasc.org/general-information/workforce-development-board-contact-information.](http://www.hasc.org/general-information/workforce-development-board-contact-information)