THE HEALTH COLLABORATIVE

VALUE REPORT

Workforce Innovation

Attracting, retaining, and advancing healthcare workforce

December 2025

Workforce Innovation at The Health Collaborative

Our Mission

With ending 2025 with more than 8,000 healthcare workforce vacancies in the Cincinnati region, we continue to focus on our mission of increasing the size, diversity, and preparedness of our region's healthcare talent pipeline. As a result of our efforts, Workforce Innovation at The Health Collaborative has become the go-to organization for healthcare workforce innovation in Ohio. Our growing efforts involve hundreds of collaborative regional and statewide partners representing employers, workforce, education, training, and healthcare and community organizations in furtherance of our mission.

Our Approach

- We **convene** more than 70 regional and statewide entities to learn and share best practices
- We **partner and collaborate** with more than 350 individuals to address specific healthcare and workforce issues
- We **advocate for systemic change**, creating a cohesive voice and increasing our regional and statewide impact
- We provide and support increasing opportunities for participating in **quality healthcare career exploration**
- We **build education pathways** to increase access and improve success rates in pursuing healthcare careers and credentials
- We **attract funding** to support workforce innovation efforts and provide seed funding to partners
- We are a **job seeker resource**, connecting healthcare job seekers to real-time in-demand career insights and active healthcare job postings on our website
- We emphasize **job quality** by co-creating and sharing best practices to enhance and improve employee retention and growth
- We collect, analyze, and share **actionable healthcare workforce data** through our online data dashboard

Our Impact

The Health Collaborative's Workforce Innovation team has secured more than $2.9M in financial support since 2020, including funding for our partners, to support identifying, developing, and implementing priority workforce innovation initiatives that attract, train, retain, and advance our healthcare workforce. Examples of our efforts and impact in 2025 are highlighted throughout this report.

Highlights

More Students Participated in Valuable Career Exploration Events

The Health Collaborative's signature career exploration programs allow students to explore a wide variety of healthcare professions. In 2025, we provided students with 2,245 individual TAP Health experiences, our largest number to date.

tap.health

The TAP Health Summer Academy offers TAP MD, TAP RN, and TAP HC which, respectively, help high school students explore careers as a physician, registered nurse, or allied health professional.

The 2025 Academy included 27 unique events. 60% of the students attended events beyond their selected program. 59% of students were racially and ethnically diverse, including 20% from backgrounds typically underrepresented in medicine and healthcare.

850 students have completed our TAP Health program since its beginnings.

VIEW THE WRAP-UP REPORT

healthFORCE

We had nearly 1,200 people attend this year's HealthFORCE, our annual career expo and the region's only healthcare-focused career exploration event.

In addition to dozens of informative and interactive exhibitor booths with more than 30 career areas featured, **the 1,000+ high school student attendees** explored 4 larger interactive exhibits for the in-demand roles of Medical Assisting, Nursing, Radiological Technology, and Surgical Technology.

Our largest number of high school students to date!

VIEW THE 2025 EVENT RECAP VIDEO

What Students Say About Our Programs

"I loved the TAP Health Program! It gave me an Insight to a wide variety of medical field positions and taught me so much about what I do and do not want to do. The other students were very friendly and the whole experience made me feel supported in my journey into a medical field."

- Laura McCormack; TAP Health Student
Taylor High School

"It was really fun to attend HealthFORCE because I loved seeing how excited everyone at the tables were about their careers. Even though we are just high schoolers, people liked talking to us just because they love talking about their jobs. It makes me excited to work in healthcare one day."

- High School Student
(from HealthFORCE 2025 survey)

What Educators and Practitioners Think About Our Programs

"We had 6 high schools and a final total of 141 students attend HealthFORCE this year. You deliver high quality results year after year, and they definitely had a great time. Keep going!"

- Andrea Newbill Hicks; Career Based Learning Specialist, Cincinnati Public Schools

"As educators, we are always looking for meaningful ways to introduce eager minds to a discipline that will fulfill them and serve the common good. The Health Collaborative's Health Summer Academy has been an invaluable partner in that mission, offering students a hands-on pathway into healthcare fields. Each year, we see participants arrive on campus with curiosity and leave with a deeper sense of purpose and possibility. Our partnership not only strengthens the region's future healthcare workforce but also reflects our shared commitment to developing students who are ready to lead with compassion and skill."

- Michael Garcia; Assistant Dean of Admission, Xavier University

"Amazing work on HealthFORCE. Our kids loved it!"

- Lauren Richardson; Experienceships Coordinator
Indian Hill Exempted Village School District

"Thank you so much for all of your hard work!! I filled out the survey but wanted to let you know directly that my students from Riverview had an AMAZING time! They were still talking about it in class today!! Your hard work is so appreciated!"

- Kristen Carter, RN; Career Tech Teacher, Riverview East

"I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for all your hard work and dedication in organizing and executing this event. The event truly exceeded all expectations, resulting in a resounding success. The atmosphere was fantastic, and it was clear that everyone involved put their heart into making it a memorable experience. Thank you again for everything!"

- Ruby Castilla; Psychiatrist & President and Founder WARMI Mental Health

Our Efforts to Scale Healthcare Career Exploration

NEW Career Exploration Event in 2025: Hack-a-Thon!

In July, we partnered with the Veterans Health Administration's Digital and Remote Health Center for Innovation to create a Hack-A-Thon event for TAP Health Summer Academy students. Our most eager and talented students were divided into 5 teams to develop potential solutions to healthcare problems that align with the VA's three current healthcare priorities: addressing homelessness; improving access to care for rural geographies; and integrating wearable technology. Twelve volunteers from prestigious hospital systems came together with other health employers, universities, and agencies to support, mentor, and further inspire these students.

100% of the students who participated responded that they would participate again, with several students saying it was their favorite thing they had ever participated in related to healthcare.

> *"Student teams asked each other, "what if?" and created inspiring solutions to serious health care challenges. What a privilege to be a part of this (Hack-A-Thon)!"*
>
> - Dr. Barb Tobias UC Family Medicine

"You Belong in Healthcare" Virtual Event

YOU BELONG IN HEALTHCARE:

In February 2025, The Health Collaborative's TAP Health program again hosted "You Belong in Healthcare," this time as a virtual event for future healthcare professionals from underrepresented backgrounds in medicine. The live, 90-minute panel included five speakers from major hospital systems and universities in the Cincinnati area and nearly 40 attendees from local high schools and colleges.

Watch the Recording

TAP Health Event Sponsors

The success of our TAP Health Summer Academy and HealthFORCE is possible due to our generous sponsors.

- Academy of Medicine
- Butler Tech
- Cincinnati Children's Hospital
- Cincinnati State Technical Community College
- Great Oaks Career Campuses
- Hamilton County Educational Service Center
- Interact for Health
- Life Center Donor Network
- Sinclair Community College
- Steve and Carol Boymel Family Foundation
- Southwest Ohio College Tech Prep
- University of Cincinnati Health Education Center

Regional Career Exploration Collaborative

Launched in March 2023, our Regional Career Exploration Collaborative (RCEC) is tasked with building and operating more quality healthcare career exploration programs for middle and high school students. The group of partners from high schools, colleges, and healthcare employers met quarterly in 2025 to share best practices and discuss what each organization is doing in the career exploration space. RCEC has already made tremendous accomplishments based on developing a new approach to scaling career exploration opportunities. This has created remarkable results, including the following:

Through RCEC connections, more middle school students gained meaningful new career exploration experiences—most notably through summer camps and an 8th-grade career expo created for CISE (Catholic Inner-City Schools Education) supported schools. Both events introduced students to in-demand careers like surgical technology, respiratory therapy, and medical lab technology and helped build excitement for future healthcare pathways.

A comprehensive Career Exploration Guide was compiled and distributed to more than 450 teachers, counselors, and administrators, and 1,200+ high school students. This guide is regularly updated, with reminders shared three times annually. It's always accessible on our website.

View the Guide

Micro-Grants

In October, The Health Collaborative received support from an anonymous donor, allowing us to again offer microgrants to our RCEC partners, likely for the next three years! This investment will fuel new and expanded career exploration efforts and target engaging an additional 500 middle and high school students each year in high-quality, hands-on healthcare career events.

Coming in 2026: Ohio Healthcare Virtual Career Fair

The Health Collaborative is excited to launch the first-ever Ohio Healthcare Virtual Career Fair, scheduled for February 25, 2026. Aimed at building the next generation of healthcare professionals, this statewide event is designed to help schools inspire middle and high school students to explore exciting careers in healthcare.

During the event, featured hospitals will share about five in-demand healthcare occupations (Medical Assistant, Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Respiratory Therapy, and Surgical Technologist) and participate in **live Q&A** sessions with the students.

Participants will also hear remarks from Ohio Governor Mike Dewine and Ohio Representative Rachel Baker, a HOSA student presentation, and informative next steps from higher education and the *American Graduate: Jobs Explained* initiative.

Learn More

Addressing Gaps in Healthcare Workforce

Building a More Robust Nursing Pipeline

Nurses represent more than 20% of the healthcare workforce, however, there simply aren't enough students graduating with nursing credentials. To fill this gap, The Health Collaborative has been working with regional and state partners to expand access to nursing programs and promote nursing career pathways, especially to racially and ethnically diverse student populations.

- More than 160 education and workforce leaders from across Ohio participated in our statewide Healthcare Education and Workforce efforts in 2025 to advocate for smarter regulations, share innovative practices, and pursue resources.
- Working in partnership with Cincinnati State, we attracted a $1.5M Hamilton County ARPA to expand their LPN and RN programs to serve up to a total of 100 more students per year. The project is being supported by federal award number 21.027, awarded by Hamilton County, Ohio by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.
- This year we brought together nursing pipeline educators from our regional programs and our members' Chief Nursing Officers to identify and implement strategies to grow and retain our region's nursing education workforce and clinical preceptors. Results of this year's work include The Health Collaborative launching a Clinical Faculty Academy for registered nurses pursuing or serving as newer and/or adjunct clinical faculty and a Nursing Preceptor Academy to equip current and aspiring preceptors with essential education, tools, and strategies to build strong preceptor-preceptee relationships.
- In January, THC provided 6 micro-grants *(approx. $7,500 each)* among our education partners to support implementing and measuring organizational solutions in 2025 to increase and retain their nursing education workforce. Recipients included Christ College, Cincinnati State, Great Oaks, Miami University, University of Cincinnati, and Xavier University.
- In June 2025, The Health Collaborative wrapped up our inaugural Nurse Manager Academy. 25 nurse leaders from 6 different hospitals/health systems completed the program, earning more than 30 CEU's plus QPR certification, and created 4 action plans to keep the learning going. One participant from this inaugural cohort shared "*Love coming to this group. Feel very supported with resources and books. Safe, supportive environment. I feel myself growing!*"
- The second cohort of the Nurse Manager Academy kicked off in August. This cohort is comprised of 36 nurse leaders from 11 different healthcare organizations, including hospitals/health systems, long-term care, and inpatient behavioral health.
- The Health Collaborative coordinated requests for 2,130 nursing student shifts through our Central Clinical Placement System, totaling 176,247 hours across our member hospitals.

Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Programs

For nearly a decade, our region has been experiencing a critical shortage of Medical Assistants. To help fill this gap, Workforce Innovation built and launched its registered Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Program in 2021 in partnership with Cincinnati State. To date, Mercy Health, TriHealth, UC Health, and Cincinnati Children's have used this program to build their workforce.

The Health Collaborative continues to work with partners to grow this program, year over year in terms of cohorts offered, apprentices served, and apprentices who complete the program. Since the beginning of 2024, 71 apprentices have started the program, and we have had 155 apprentices start the program since its launch in 2021. The program participants' first-year turnover rate among all 155 apprentices is just 13.5%, compared to the region's total first-year Medical Assistant turnover rate, which is more than 50%. Ten cohorts have fully completed the program, and the apprentice completion rate for those cohorts is 86%.

New Priority Occupation Workgroups

In 2025, The Health Collaborative launched four priority occupation workgroups—Nursing, Medical Assisting, Radiologic Technologists, and Surgical Technologists—based on Chief Human Resources Officer input from our member health systems and informed by regional workforce data. These workgroups include more than 25 active employer, education, and community partners collaborating to strengthen the talent pipeline in these high-demand fields.

By the third quarter, the workgroups produced four new career pathway documents and designed 16 hands-on student activities showcased at our October HealthFORCE event, where more than 1,000 high school students engaged with real-world scenarios and met directly with healthcare professionals and post-secondary students.

Looking ahead, the workgroups will focus on identifying and addressing top barriers to student access and success in pursuing these careers and expanding high-quality career exploration opportunities in these priority occupations.

"In-Demand Jobs Week" Campaign

The Health Collaborative continues to participate in Ohio's In-Demand Jobs Week, highlighting the most in-demand healthcare careers in the Cincinnati area. Our top 10 career profiles were shared broadly with schools, on social media, and on workforce.healthcollab.org.

View the profiles

Regional Healthcare Workforce Data Dashboard

Launched in 2023 as part of The Health Collaborative's Community Health Improvement Plan, the Healthcare Workforce Data Dashboard continues to be the hub showcasing our region's healthcare workforce data. The dashboard is powered by The Health Collaborative's workforce report and JobsEQ, a national labor market analytics tool, with regular data updates quarterly throughout the year. A newly added section in 2025 includes career profiles on our region's 10 most in-demand jobs, including average salary and the current number of active job postings.

The public can also assess the current state of equity and diversity in our region's healthcare sector and track the progress of achieving a healthcare workforce that is reflective of our community. Altogether, the data dashboard provides partners with a vital tool for strategic planning and pursuing funding opportunities for workforce innovation.

Occupation Snapshot

6-Digit Occupation	Empl	Avg Mean Wages	LQ	3-Year Empl Change	Annual Demand	Forecast Ann Growth
Registered Nurses	26,990	$90,400	1.14	2,196	1,359	0.1%

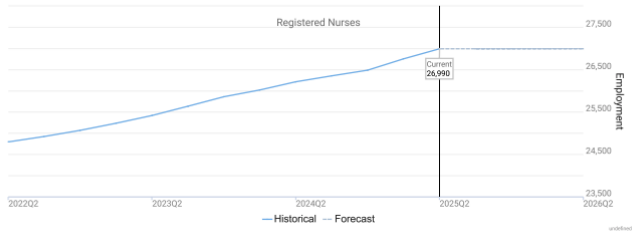

Image at right: Registered Nurse Occupation Snapshot. Source: Healthcare Workforce Data Dashboard powered by JobsEQ

Centering Entry-Level Workers in Job Design and Career Navigation

In 2025, The Health Collaborative continued efforts through the National Fund for Workforce Solutions grant, *Centering Workers in Job Design: Improving Career Navigation for Entry-Level Workers in Healthcare*. Partnering with TriHealth and Clinton Regional Hospital, this project focuses on using human-centered design to better understand the needs of entry-level workers and redesign career navigation supports to better support them in growing their careers within healthcare.

Throughout the year, The Health Collaborative facilitated worker-centered focus groups that surfaced key insights around productivity challenges, clinical barriers, and the value of intentional career conversations. These insights informed a slate of interventions—several of which began launching in 2025—including integrating career development conversations into performance reviews, piloting internal career expos, and developing clear, easy-to-use career pathway one-pagers for frontline roles.

As we shift into 2026, TriHealth and Clinton Regional Hospital will begin implementing a jointly developed action plan created during 2025 planning sessions. This coordinated approach, supported by ongoing worker check-ins and redesign sessions, ensures the interventions stay closely aligned with the needs and experiences of entry-level staff.

Workforce Innovation Partnership Meetings Foster Collaboration and Align Efforts

The Health Collaborative regularly convenes additional regional and state partners to move healthcare workforce innovation forward. This approach has led to the implementation of many new initiatives, creating systemic change and positively impacting the healthcare talent pipeline. Our affinity groups include:

- **Workforce Advisory Council** – Quarterly meetings filled with best practice sharing and strategic discussions among member health systems, community-based organizations, and workforce and education partners provide direction for the Workforce Innovation team's future efforts.
- **Healthcare Pathway Partners** – monthly meetings connecting engaged school districts, career technical centers, community and education partners, and employers facilitate the creation and promotion of new efforts, sharing of successes and lessons learned, and identifying solutions for challenges.
- **Regional Career Exploration Collaborative** – Quarterly meetings with regional healthcare education, community, and employer partners provide best practice sharing about quality career exploration opportunities and support designing and launching new and expanded student and educator experiences.
- **Ohio Healthcare Education & Workforce Leaders** – Quarterly meetings with healthcare education and workforce leaders from across the state enable sharing of best practices, identifying and addressing barriers, and promoting public policy and investment recommendations, all to strengthen Ohio's healthcare workforce systems.
- **Ohio Healthcare Workforce Collaborative** – Monthly meetings with healthcare association and workforce peers from across Ohio provide us all better opportunities to champion innovative strategies, policies, and scalable solutions for Ohio's most pressing healthcare workforce needs, recognizing that we can accomplish more together.
- **Chief Nursing Officers** – monthly meetings with regional CNOs assist us in connecting them and their teams to current workforce efforts such growing new managers' leadership skills and increasing the qualified pool of nursing instructors and preceptors in the region.

Awards and Recognition

The Health Collaborative's Workforce Innovation team received a **Workforce Champion Award for Leadership** by the Workforce Council of Southwest Ohio for exemplary collaboration and contributions to our region's workforce and employer community.

In May 2025, our Workforce Innovation team was recognized as a **Key Community Partner** by the Greater Cincinnati Business Advisory Council.

In June of 2025, Heleena McKinney was honored by Movers & Makers in their "Helping Teens Succeed" category for reaching more than 10,000 students in the last 10 years. McKinney was also invited to serve as a featured guest panelist for the Community Partners Panel at the 2025 Principal Leadership Institute, an event co-hosted by the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Public Schools.

Staying Connected with the Community

Workforce Innovation is dedicated to being a good partner and representing our members' interests throughout Greater Cincinnati. To achieve this, we actively participate in many healthcare and workforce advisory councils, boards, committees, and planning groups, including the following:

- American Hospital Association Workforce Committee
- Catholic Inner-City Schools Education (CISE) Business Advisory Council
- Cincinnati Public Schools' Healthcare Advisory Groups and Business Advisory Council
- Cincinnati State Technical Community College's Nursing Advisory Council
- Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library's Community Advisory Council
- Great Oaks' Healthcare Advisory Council
- Greater Cincinnati Business Advisory Council
- Healthcare Workforce Accelerator Group *(national initiative)*
- Hoxworth Blood Center's Community Advisory Board
- Mental Health and Addiction Advocacy Coalition
- NKY Works *(formerly GROW NKY)*
- Northern Kentucky College & Career Counselor Network
- Ohio Alliance for Population Health
- Ohio Workforce Council's Leadership and Policy Committees
- River City School District Network
- Scarlet Oaks Healthcare Advisory Council
- Sinclair Community College's Strategic Planning Group
- SOCHE's Healthcare Advisory Group
- SW Ohio Career Pathway Support Network Strategic Partner *(prev. SWOH College Tech Prep)*
- Southwest Ohio Jobs Explained *(an initiative of PBS-ThinkTV/CET)* Business Advisory Committee
- The Talent Collaborative's Steering Committee and Founding Member
- The Christ College of Nursing & Health Sciences Diagnostic Sonograph Advisory Board
- University of City's CPS Strong Committee
- University of Cincinnati's College of Nursing Advisory Board
- Workforce Council of SW Ohio Board of Directors and OMJ Center Review and Youth Committees

2025-2026 Funding Partners

Workforce Innovation at The Health Collaborative is honored to have been selected to lead ten strategic workforce investments made possible through the following funders.

- Anonymous Workforce Innovation Funder
- Butler County - ARPA Funding
- Cincinnati State - Hamilton County ARPA Funding
- Greater Cincinnati Foundation – Brighter Futures
- National Fund for Workforce Solutions
- Southwest Ohio Career Pathway Support Network *(prev. SWOH College TechPrep)*
- State of Ohio Industry Sector Partnership grants
- University of Cincinnati - Genentech
- Warren County - ARPA Funding

Leading strategic workforce initiatives across 10 grants

Meet Our Workforce Innovation Team

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Contact Us

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