

## **PROJECT NARRATIVE**

### **Executive Summary**

A diverse healthcare workforce leads to better health outcomes and a stronger local economy. Like other parts of the country, Polk, Dallas, and Warren counties in central Iowa are experiencing racial disparities in health outcomes and shortages of healthcare workers. United Way of Central Iowa's (UWCI's) HealthWorks program serves individuals with barriers to employment as they train for a high-demand, high-quality healthcare career.

The Central Iowa Healthcare Sector Partnership developed HealthWorks in 2016. The program combats the shortage of skilled healthcare workers and brings a diverse population into the workforce. This is a Program Implementation proposal that expands on HealthWorks' success, introducing new entry-level positions and additional skills trainings to the healthcare career pathway program. UWCI requests \$1,856,764.39 for a three-year project to train 500 individuals with barriers to employment for placement in a high-quality healthcare job.

HealthWorks recruits and supports individuals to complete training and find employment. HealthWorks offers hands-on support and case management to each participant to help them overcome systematic barriers. Once enrolled, participants receive financial help with tuition, books, supplies, and wraparound services. Supporting individuals along their chosen healthcare career pathway with case management is what sets HealthWorks apart from other tuition assistance programs.

Three years of funding will expand the HealthWorks career pathways beyond its current Certified Nursing Assistant-Licensed Practical Nurse-Registered Nurse pipeline to reach other high-demand healthcare positions. Building on the experience of the previous four years, UWCI and partners will expand services and work towards program sustainability.

### **Development of Sectoral Partnership and HealthWorks**

The Central Iowa Healthcare Sector Partnership formed to find solutions to the skilled labor shortage. Healthcare employers have been worried about the number of retiring employees for the last 5-10 years. They have collaborated to address the shortage of skilled employees by developing training programs for entry-level positions. With the current worker shortage created by the COVID-19 pandemic, employers are highly motivated to consider new hiring practices and on-the-job trainings and to engage incumbent employees in new ways.

UWCI's Central Iowa Works department (CIW) and healthcare partners created HealthWorks in 2016. These partners include the community's three major hospital systems, long-term care institutions, job developers from community organizations, and educators. Since its creation, HealthWorks has helped 648 individuals train for a healthcare career. Table 1 details the demographics of HealthWorks participants. To date, healthcare employers have hired 532 individuals or 82% of HealthWorks participants.

**Table 1. HealthWorks Participants To-Date**

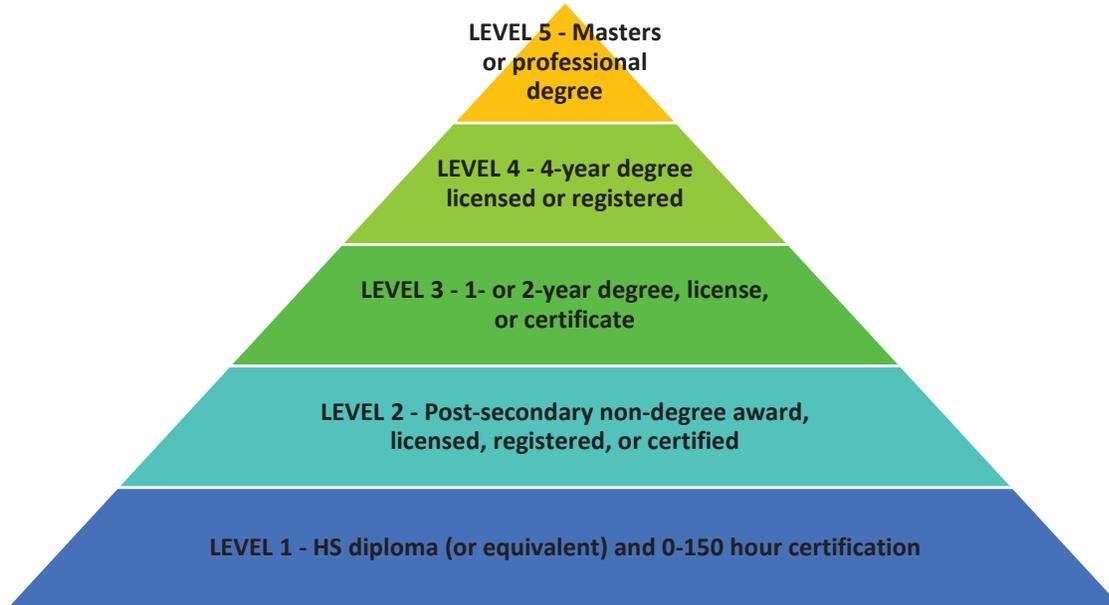
	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Black/African American	505	78%
White	159	26%
Asian	51	8%
Latinx	31	5%
More than one race	28	4%
Native American	11	2%
Other	1	0%
Under/Unemployed	397	89%
Refugee/Immigrant	252	39%
Person with a Disability	38	6%
Under 100% Poverty Level	343	53%
Under 250% Poverty Level	583	90%
Criminal Background	90	14%
Single Parent	213	33%

HealthWorks has two goals. The first is to support employers to attract and retain individuals to fill the much-needed positions in central Iowa’s healthcare sector. The second goal is to help individuals who face systemic barriers to employment overcome those obstacles and use their skills to earn a livable wage. Each of these goals directly relates to an EDA investment priority: Equity and Workforce Development. HealthWorks’ results prove the program is meeting these goals. To date, 90% of HealthWorks participants are below the threshold for financial self-sufficiency and 39% were born outside the United States. HealthWorks not only diversifies the healthcare sector but also helps underserved and underrepresented populations find high-quality jobs.

HealthWorks is best visualized as a career pathway pyramid. See Image 1. The pyramid identifies the progression of education and training beginning at the base or entry-level healthcare positions. The image helps identify entry points for participants and guides them as they train and move up the pyramid. At each level on the HealthWorks pyramid, there is an incentive for greater growth and stability in income and benefits. The farther up a student progresses, the better the pay, benefits, and hours become. HealthWorks supports individuals as they move through levels 1-4 of the career pyramid.

This proposal expands the base of the HealthWorks pyramid with additional healthcare career entry points. The career pathways in Level 2 are new to the program and expand the career opportunities for participants. Levels 3 and 4 include additional career opportunities. A wider and more inclusive base makes for a more stable healthcare workforce. Moreover, the addition of new entry-level positions gives more people the opportunity to train for and secure high-quality careers while also filling critical healthcare positions.

**Image 1. HealthWorks Career Pyramid**



This new phase addresses the other critical staffing shortages within central Iowa’s healthcare sector. Now that the nursing pathway is well established, this is the time to add new positions to HealthWorks. The new positions include Direct Care, Dietary Aide, Environmental Services, Pharmacy Technician, Phlebotomist, Community Health Worker, Dental Assistant, Certified Medical Assistant, Administrator, and Social Worker. Table 2 lists the available HealthWorks positions and the average wage for those positions.

**Table 2. HealthWorks Positions**

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Average Hourly Wage: \$13-15	Average Hourly Wage: \$16-18	Average Hourly Wage: \$22-30	Average Hourly Wage: \$30-40
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)</li> <li>• Direct Care Provider*</li> <li>• Dietary Aide*</li> <li>• Environmental Services*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pharmacy Tech*</li> <li>• Phlebotomist*</li> <li>• Dental Assistant*</li> <li>• Community Health Worker*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)</li> <li>• Certified Medical Assistant (CMA)*</li> <li>• Registered Nurse (RN)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RN (B.S. Nursing)</li> <li>• Administrator*</li> <li>• Social Worker*</li> </ul>

\*Signifies new position for HealthWorks.

The Healthcare Sector Partnership selected these positions for two reasons. First, these positions are critical to central Iowa’s healthcare system. Second, these are good career-starting positions that offer advancement. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic created a critical shortage of direct care providers, which results in individuals with disabilities and mental health

needs and Iowa's aging population not receiving needed services. To address this issue, the Healthcare Sector Partnership created a career pathway and improved wages to attract more people to this career. Additionally, the Sector Partnership recognizes that many people's first job in healthcare is as a Dietary Aide or Environmental Services. These positions are critical to the operation of the whole system. They are also good positions for further job training, to ensure these employees see pathways for themselves in healthcare. These additions to HealthWorks further the Healthcare Sector Partnership's goal of retaining more individuals who start at the base of the career pyramid as they advance in their careers.

HealthWorks attracts and supports individuals with barriers to employment. Systemic issues create barriers that require purposeful mitigation to overcome. HealthWorks provides financial support to participants, but more importantly, HealthWorks provides one-on-one case management to support individuals along their journey. Case Managers connect participants with a variety of supportive services. Referrals may include counseling, disability services, childcare, and English as second language services. Case Managers tailor services to the individual to ensure they receive the academic, peer, and social support necessary to complete their training. The reason HealthWorks participants find more success than the general community college population is because they have a case manager that knows of the available supportive resources and can help participants with the confidence and perseverance needed to complete training and start a new career.

Target populations include people of color, people earning less than 250% of the Federal Poverty Level, single parents, refugees/immigrants, individuals with criminal histories, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. HealthWorks helps individuals just starting their healthcare training and individuals who are looking to advance their careers. HealthWorks case managers meet with program applicants to learn about their interests and create an initial plan to make sure the individual is prepared to enter training. Once participants complete the steps to enrollment, case managers help create long-term goals for program completion. Case managers ensure tuition, supplies, and other fees are paid and help connect participants to wraparound services as needed.

All HealthWorks participants are legally entitled to work in the U.S., are at least 16 years old, and live in either Polk, Dallas, or Warren counties in Iowa. Participants are either an underemployed or unemployed job seeker or an individual recommended by a supervisor for advancement. Individuals who are new to the healthcare workforce must meet one of the following criteria: low income, underrepresented in the targeted industry, dislocated worker, long-term unemployment, limited English proficiency, a disability, childcare needs, prior criminal history, single parent, foster care youth, migrant or seasonable farmworker, experiencing homelessness, or displaced homemaker. For participants already in healthcare, preference is given to individuals who meet these criteria.

There is greater demand for HealthWorks than what current capacity can manage. Three times a year, at the start of each semester, the HealthWorks waitlist has an average of 50

qualified and motivated applicants. Referrals are made by healthcare employers, nonprofit partners, education providers, and previous HealthWorks participants.

CIW maintains many relationships in the community to recruit HealthWorks participants. For example, CIW hosts a monthly community-wide job developer meeting that convenes nonprofits and government agencies that serve individuals seeking employment. This group serves low-income individuals, immigrants and refugees, veterans, individuals of color, women who have suffered abuse, and other diverse groups. The Healthcare Sector Partnership also meets monthly and gives updates on training opportunities. Healthcare employers promote HealthWorks training to current staff working in entry-level positions. Employers also promote HealthWorks to job applicants who were not hired for an open position. Education providers refer individuals who show interest in programs but have a barrier to training.

HealthWorks case managers help participants navigate and mitigate barriers. Wraparound services include financial support for tuition, textbooks, and supplies. Case managers assist with transportation costs, childcare, and housing when necessary. Case managers connect participants to student supports such as tutors, study sessions, remedial classes, and testing preparation. Case managers also review grades with participants and model how to communicate with professors. If a student fails a test or a class, the case manager is there to encourage the student and help plan the next steps that lead to success. Case managers are a consistent resource for participants and help navigate the requirements for the various healthcare careers.

Both employers and educators contribute time and money to HealthWorks. Healthcare employers provided funding to continue the program after UWCI completed a U.S. Department of Labor grant that funded HealthWorks' initial four years. Employers also manage their own CNA training programs, covering the education costs for participants. Educators use grants and private dollars to cover the tuition costs for participants. HealthWorks participants who do not complete their training by the end of a grant are still working with their case managers and receiving wraparound services.

Measurement tools and data collection practices are already in place. Interested candidates complete an application that requests demographic data including age, race, education, and income level. Candidates also complete an assessment and interview. Once selected, participants complete enrollment paperwork with releases from HealthWorks partners. Case managers collect information about completion dates and grades. Other collected data include certificate completion for short-term programs, grades for long-term programs, and employment information including the name of employer, position, wage, and start date. Case managers also survey participants at the end of each program year. The Healthcare Sector Partnership uses this information to guide future program offerings and direction. For example, program evaluation of its first four years revealed that people of color are more likely to be in the frontline CNA program rather than the longer-term RN program. This unexpected result is shaping this next phase of HealthWorks to transition those in entry-level healthcare positions into higher-paying positions.

**Backbone Organization’s Capacity**

United Way of Central Iowa is a 501(c)(3) organization that brings together nonprofits, businesses, elected officials, and community leaders to collaborate and implement solutions to central Iowa’s most pervasive challenges. Its mission is to improve lives by uniting the caring power of the community. UWCI is the Backbone Organization for the Central Iowa Healthcare Sector Partnership.

UWCI serves Polk, Dallas, and Warren counties in central Iowa. Polk County is the state’s largest and most diverse county and is home to Des Moines, Iowa’s capital. All three counties are considered urban and have a total population of 644,482. The region has higher employment in management, business, science, and art occupations than the rest of the state and country. The Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance CEDS forecasts most occupations in the region will grow, especially jobs in Personal Care and Services, Healthcare Support, and Community and Social Services.

Central Iowa has four Opportunity Zones. See Table 3. The poverty rates of these tracts are higher than average. These neighborhoods are some of the most dis-invested in the community and have the highest rates of unemployment, generational poverty, economic underdevelopment, social and economic dislocation, population decline, health, and safety issues, deteriorated living conditions, and general blight. The average rate of people living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level is 9.5% (Polk County 10.4%, Dallas County 5.2%, and Warren County 8.2%).

**Table 3. 100% of Federal Poverty Level Rate of Opportunity Zones in Central Iowa**

<b>Designated Opportunity Zone</b>	<b>Census Tract Number</b>	<b>Rate living below 100% FPL</b>
Polk County, Iowa (Drake North, Des Moines)	19153001100	44.3%
Polk County, Iowa (Drake South, Des Moines)	19153002600	33.3%
Polk County, Iowa (West Des Moines)	19153011001	7.9%
Dallas County, Iowa (Perry)	19049050400	11.8%

UWCI’s region is part of the Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance, a newly formed Economic Development District for central Iowa. EDA approved the Mid-Iowa CEDS in December 2021. The Mid-Iowa CEDS notes that Healthcare Support is one of the top occupations forecasted for growth. It also states that one of the goals of the region is to prepare the workforce for the evolving Mid-Iowa economy. This is accomplished through easy and affordable access to educational opportunities and apprenticeships serving to upskill the workforce, meet the employment needs of the region’s employers, and prepare for opportunities into the future. With an emphasis on upskilling undereducated and low-income workers, HealthWorks is a workforce training program that will help the region meet this goal. Moreover, HealthWorks will help Mid-Iowa fill the continually growing healthcare positions by creating a more diverse workforce.

Central Iowa Works is a workforce intermediary with a track record of success. Workforce intermediaries are local partnerships that bring together employers and workers, public and private funding streams, and relevant partners to create and implement pathways to career advancement and employment.

CIW takes a sector-based approach to workforce development. This strategy targets industries to improve opportunities for workers while working to build stronger regional economies. Aligning workforce development with the economic trends and needs of employers increases the likelihood of job placement, retention, and advancement. CIW builds partnerships, implements solutions, and advocates for change to maximize talent in central Iowa’s workforce. CIW works with marginalized groups and designs its programs to respond to issues of inequity to reduce disparities.

CIW has been in the National Fund for Workforce Solutions network for more than 10 years and uses its resources to train sector partner employers. CIW uses the “Job Quality” maps to explain to employers which aspects of a job affect recruitment, retention, burnout, and employee engagement. This allows employers to make informed improvements to their positions. CIW partnered with the Iowa Department of Education to create the “Opportunities in Health Sciences – Iowa Career Pathways” tool, which helps employers and employees understand how their current skills are transferrable to other healthcare careers. The tool also informs individuals on the many career pathways available for advancement.

CIW runs HealthWorks and manages the Healthcare Sector Partnership. It also convenes a regular sector partnership for the financial services industry, attends a construction sector partnership, and is developing a customer service sector partnership. CIW has helped more than 3,000 individuals into jobs in advanced manufacturing, energy/construction, financial services, transportation/distribution/logistics, and healthcare. Over 1,000 incumbent workers have trained and received either promotion, wage increases, or both. With its strong employer partnerships, CIW influences changes in workforce practices among its employer partners by introducing new ways of hiring, training, and retaining employees.

CIW successfully managed two Department of Labor grants including an RP2 REO grant and an America’s Promise H1-B grant, both of which ended in 2021. Each of these grants relied on the collaboration of sector partners. CIW exceeded all performance goals. See Table 4. CIW recently started a third Department of Labor grant that supports CIW’s reentry training program.

**Table 4. Department of Labor Grant Outcomes**

<b>Name of Grant</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Performance Rate</b>
America’s Promise H1B Grant: <i>HealthWorks</i>	Placement in Education or Employment	380	550	145%
	Certificate Attainment	304	442	145%
RP2 REO Grant: <i>CIRCA</i>	Placement in Education or Employment	132	195	148%
	Certificate Attainment	113	204	180%

UWCI has a strong reputation for responsible grants management, including unqualified audits and site visits, financial and programmatic reports, and meeting or exceeding performance objectives. The grant management and business policies and procedures at UWCI are consistent with the regulations in the Uniform Grant Guidance (2 CFR Part 200). UWCI's finance officer oversees budget decisions and is responsible for the financial reporting of the organization.

UWCI's CIW department will continue to manage HealthWorks. Full-time staff devoted to HealthWorks includes three case managers and a program manager. The CIW Director provides program oversight.

HealthWorks Case Managers provide direct support to HealthWorks participants. Support begins at program enrollment and continues as participants find, maintain, and advance in their chosen healthcare career. Case managers continue to help if issues arise after finding employment and help when individuals are ready for career advancement. Three case managers are needed to support 500 participants over three years. 100% of case manager time will be covered with this funding. UWCI has two case managers on staff and will hire a third case manager after receiving a grant award.

*Erica Tulk* has worked for 10 years in the nonprofit sector, specializing in employment and training services for individuals underrepresented and underemployed. She also has experience as a Direct Care Professional, assisting individuals with mental and intellectual disabilities. Erika has worked as a HealthWorks Case Manager since 2018.

*Sarah Garrison* has worked in nonprofits for nine years, including work in vocational supportive services as an Employment Specialist and Employment Consultant. Sarah also has experience as a Direct Care Professional in various capacities including individual and group care. Sarah began working as a HealthWorks Case Manager in January 2022.

The HealthWorks Program Manager is responsible for the operation of HealthWorks, including adherence to grant rules and guidelines, collecting data, completing reports, supervising staff, overseeing scholarships, stipends, and financial responsibilities of the program, and convening the Healthcare Sector Partnership meetings. 100% of the Project Manager's time will be covered with this funding.

*Ahmed Obayes* was hired as the HealthWorks Program Manager in December 2021. He has more than eight years of management and supervision experience. In the last two years, Ahmed worked as a career pathways supervisor to improve the economy and social living for refugees and immigrants living in Des Moines. Ahmed delivered service to clients by developing a career pathway, navigating employment, and finding solutions to overcome barriers that stop people from achieving their career goals.

The Central Iowa Works Director advances UWCI's mission by leading, building, and maintaining community partnerships in the employment sector to help individuals move toward financial stability. The CIW Director leads the CIW team in meeting program goals and outcomes by working directly with workforce and education partners. This position oversees the HealthWorks program. UWCI will cover the CIW Director's time spent on HealthWorks.

*Amber Ramirez* is the Central Iowa Works Director and has worked in the workforce development field for the past 10 years. Ambers works to increase economic opportunities in central Iowa. She leads a community reentry task force and sits on the Greater Des Moines Partnership Inclusion Council and the Iowa Literacy Council Board.

**Workers Served & Expected Job Placements**

From July 2022 through June 2025, UWCI and the Healthcare Sector Partnership will help 500 individuals train for a healthcare career. Each HealthWorks participant will receive help with tuition and fees and wraparound services as needed. Each participant will have a case manager to help navigate barriers and encourage them as they train.

HealthWorks participants are in levels 1-4 of the HealthWorks career pyramid. Table 5 details the expected number of individuals for each of the four HealthWorks levels, the mean wage for each position, and the projected growth. The goal of serving 500 individuals is based on previous program years and is manageable for UWCI staff and sector partners.

**Table 5. Number of HealthWorks Participants Who Will Complete Training**

HealthWorks Pyramid Level	Number of Individuals	Jobs	Mean Wage	Projected Growth (2018-2028)
Level 4 – 4-Year Degree	15	RN (BSN)	\$29.39	15%
		Administrator	\$38.93	15%
		Social Worker	\$26.04	15%
Level 3 – 1- or 2-Year Degree	80	RN (ASN/ADN)	\$29.39	15%
		LPN	\$22.04	15%
		Medical Assistant	\$17.97	26%
Level 2 – Post-Secondary Non-Degree	55	Pharmacy Technician	\$16.40	12%
		Dental Assistant	\$21.40	15%
		Phlebotomist	\$15.00	31%
		Community Health Worker	\$17.99	19%
Level 1 – HS Diploma & Certification	350	CNA	\$14.63	11%
		Home Health Aide*	\$13.02	29%
		Personal Care Aide*	\$11.85	9%
		Environmental Services	\$13.36	9%
		Dietary Aide	\$12.00	11%

*\*These two positions fall under the “Direct Care Provider” label.*

These healthcare positions include health, vision, dental, life, and 401k benefits for full and part-time employees. Healthcare employer partners provide employees with regular development opportunities and employee engagement.

These positions are at all levels of the HealthWorks pyramid. Table 6 details the expected demographics for the projected HealthWorks participants from July 2022 through June 2025.

CIW expects 87% will earn at least one credential and 75% of credential earners will find employment in a quality job.

To alleviate the workforce shortage, HealthWorks focuses on recruiting new populations to the healthcare field. HealthWorks attracts individuals to all levels of the healthcare career pyramid, but the most important aspect of the process is connecting people to the healthcare system in a way that promotes belonging and motivation for advancement. Many participants start in an entry-level position like a CNA, work for a few years then return to the program to train to become an LPN or an RN. HealthWorks recruits previous program participants or current healthcare employees for the longer-term training found in levels 3-4 of the pyramid.

**Table 6. Expected Demographics of Projected HealthWorks Participants**

	<b>Recruited</b>	<b>87% Earn a Credential</b>	<b>75% Placed in Quality Job</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	500	435	326
Female	300	261	196
Male	200	174	131
Black or African American	255	222	166
Hispanic/Latinx	35	30	23
Asian American	40	35	26
Native American	5	4	3
Pacific Islander	0	0	0
White	150	131	98
Two or more races/ethnicities	15	13	10
Refugee/Immigrant	185	161	121
Under 250% of Federal Poverty Level	460	400	300
WIOA Low Income	300	261	196
Disability	25	22	16
Criminal Record	65	27	42

Historically, about 30% of HealthWorks participants are unemployed when they enroll. Those participants have a projected income gain of more than \$30,000 per year. The other 70% of participants are underemployed and working on skilling up to the next level of their career. Individuals who move into entry-level positions usually see a \$2 per hour (\$4,160 annually) raise. Individuals who move from a CNA position to nursing positions usually see raises of more than \$10 per hour (\$20,800 annually).

CIW partners with other organizations to provide tuition, textbooks, supplies, and comprehensive wraparound services for HealthWorks participants. Level 1 participants have a

tuition cost of \$1,260 per participant, Level 2 participants have a tuition cost of \$1,200 per participant, Level 3 participants have a tuition cost of \$3,750 per participant, and Level 4 participants have a tuition cost of \$5,000 per participant. Wraparound services average \$120 per participant regardless of the career path.

**Employer Partnerships**

UWCI’s Central Iowa Works has served as the Healthcare Sector Partnership’s backbone agency for more than 10 years. In that time, partners have collaborated on different ways to attract and retain healthcare employees. First, the partnership held entry-level trainings for individuals who were then hired by employer partners when training was complete. As the partnership strengthened, CIW worked with employers to create their own CNA training programs. For these programs, individuals are hired and go through certification training while working. Each of the three hospital systems, and several long-term care facilities, now manage a CNA training program. Each of these programs is part of HealthWorks, which provides case management and wraparound services. The training programs are sustainable solutions that help the workforce shortage, but they do not fill the skilled workforce gap.

The Healthcare Sector Partnership meets monthly to discuss challenges in central Iowa’s healthcare workforce, which includes the lack of diversity in the workforce, the shortage of nurses to fill available positions, and the growing demand for personal care and home health aides. Table 7 lists the employers, educators, and community organizations that are Healthcare Sector Partners and their role in HealthWorks.

**Table 7. Central Iowa Healthcare Sector Partnership Members & Roles**

<b>Employers</b>	
Accura HealthCare	Long-term care employer
Balance Autism	Employer that supports individuals with disabilities
Broadlawn Medical Center	Hospital employer; CNA training program
Candeo	Employer that supports individuals with disabilities
EveryStep	Long-term care employer
HOPE Agency	Employer that supports individuals with disabilities
Iowa Digestive Disease Center	Medical clinic employer
Luther Park Community	Long-term care employer
Mainstream Living	Long-term care employer
MercyOne – Des Moines	Hospital employer; CNA training program
UnityPoint Health – Des Moines	Hospital employer; CNA training program
WesleyLife	Long-term care employer; CNA training program
<b>Agencies &amp; Associations</b>	
Aging Resources of Central Iowa	Support individuals 60 and older with questions about aging or living with a disability
Bureau of Refugee Services	Support newly arrived refugees to the community
Epilepsy Foundation of Iowa	Supports individuals with epilepsy

Iowa Board of Nursing	Help case managers ensure participants get the correct nursing certifications; suggest prep courses for the NCLEX
Iowa CareGivers Association	Advocate for the direct care workforce
Iowa Health Care Association	Advocate for the direct care workforce
Iowa Hospital Association	Advocate health policy issues that affect hospital services and workers
Iowa Nurses Association	Offer resources for participants and advocate for improved working conditions for nurses
Iowa Primary Care Association	Create career pathways and programming that ensures everyone has access to quality care
<b>Educators</b>	
Des Moines Area Community College	Provide training and education for certificates and associate degrees
Mercy College of Health Sciences	Provide education for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing
Signature Healthcare	CNA training provider
<b>Community Organizations</b>	
Catholic Charities – Des Moines	Support refugees with employment and other services
Goodwill of Central Iowa	Support individuals with disabilities to connect with employers and address necessary accommodations
iJag	Support youth to connect to careers
Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families	Support individuals to reach their employment goals
Lutheran Services in Iowa	Provide English language classes and workforce supports to refugees and immigrants
Project Iowa	Support individuals in the community to reach their employment goals

Employer partners are involved with all levels of HealthWorks trainings. Employers help create and enhance training curriculum, select participants, hold mock interviews, and lead classroom discussions and onsite tours. All members of the Healthcare Sector Partnership are doing what they can to make it possible for nursing students to work while they train. This includes offering flexible learning schedules and providing hands-on practical job training. Most importantly, sector partners provide students with wraparound services and other support to help them overcome roadblocks.

In the most recent sector partnership meetings, employers have shared the emerging hiring practices created in response to the pandemic workforce shortage. For example, job descriptions are scrutinized to determine whether applicants are unintentionally screened out of contention. Part of this proposal includes leadership training for hiring managers to help them draft inclusive job descriptions and develop onboarding processes for a workforce with less practical experience. To combat employee burnout, employers need support in creating mental wellness support groups and training for staff at all employer locations. Sector partners also want

to ensure there are healthcare-focused English language classes available for refugees interested in a healthcare career.

### **Regional Needs**

Central Iowa’s healthcare sector is suffering from a workforce shortage. The three major hospital systems, which provide higher wages and more benefits, are having trouble filling their current openings. The workforce shortage is more acute at long-term care facilities and smaller healthcare facilities, especially those outside the Des Moines metro. This shortage began before the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, 22% of Iowa nurses were eligible for retirement, while at the same time it was estimated Iowa would need 5,000 additional nurses by 2026. The pandemic has increased the pace of retirements and increased the strain on employers. Today, central Iowa healthcare employers have more than 937 open positions. Filling nursing, CNA, and direct care provider positions is especially difficult.

In recent Healthcare Sector Partnership meetings, employers discussed the strain COVID-19 is having on employees and the sector. The stress and burnout from overwork impact staff retention. Recruitment is more challenging due to a lack of applicants. Additionally, staffing shortages make it difficult to hire new employees because the current staff does not have the time to train new staff. Hospitals are hiring traveling nurses to fill critical positions, which creates resentment among current staff—traveling nurses often earn more than employees—but it also negatively impacts the local economy when premium wages leave the community.

Beyond filling the healthcare workforce gap, HealthWorks addresses the lack of diversity within central Iowa’s healthcare sector, which in turn impacts community health. Racial disparities in health outcomes are partially related to the underrepresentation of people of color in the healthcare workforce. Studies show that a more diverse workforce can address disparities by expanding access to underserved populations, increasing research in neglected areas, and enriching the pool of stakeholders to meet the needs of a diverse population.

In 2019, the Iowa Board of Nursing reported 47,812 registered nurses in Iowa. 95.7% of Iowa nurses identify as white and 4.3% identify as a person of color. The total nonwhite population of central Iowa is 9.4%. There are nearly 11,000 nurses in central Iowa, of which 6.63% identify as a person of color.

Polk County holds 78% of the population of the three-county region and is the only county that provides health outcomes data categorized by race. According to the Iowa Department of Public Health’s 2020 Health Indicators Report for Polk County:

- White women have an infant mortality rate of 5.0 per 1,000 live births compared to 11.8 for Black/African Americans and 7.9 for Latinx women. 6.7% of white babies are born with low birth weight, compared to 11.2% of Black/African American babies and 9.1% of Latinx babies.
- Black/African American adults are almost twice as likely to experience asthma—20.6% compared to 11.6% of white adults.

- Black/African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with certain types of cancer compared to white people. Colon and rectum cancers are 62.5 per 100,000 population vs. 42.6; lung cancer is 99.2 per 100,000 population vs. 66.8; and prostate cancer is 170.4 per 100,000 population vs. 90.6.
- Mortality rates for coronary heart disease are also higher for Black/African Americans: 159.6 per 100,000 population vs. 98.0.

HealthWorks is already impacting the diversity of the healthcare workforce. In its first four years, 44% of the nurses who graduated through the program identified as a person of color.

### **Regional Investment & Sustainability**

HealthWorks employers and educators use their funds to support participants and carry the cost burden. Partners leverage grant funds secured by UWCI by using state and private resources to cover tuition and training. Over the next three years of this project, healthcare sector partners will invest an additional \$132,272 in HealthWorks participants.

As the number of people who need care rises, healthcare employers are motivated to improve the workforce shortage. The state is also looking for solutions. Its “Future Ready Iowa” initiative helps improve Iowa’s workforce by connecting Iowans to the education and training needed for good-paying jobs. The top two high-demand jobs listed on [www.futurereadyiowa.gov](http://www.futurereadyiowa.gov) are registered nurses and nursing assistants. Five other healthcare positions are in the top 15 job postings on the site.

The state now recognizes the importance of providing tuition assistance for high-demand fields, especially the healthcare careers that are part of HealthWorks. New tuition assistance programs allow HealthWorks to expand the number of students it can support. The “Last-Dollar Scholarship” pays for tuition gaps not covered by other state and federal grants for targeted, high-demand programs, and the “Pathways for Academic Career Employment” program provides funding for CNA tuition for eligible students. These tuition programs free up HealthWorks dollars to pay for textbooks, supplies, and comprehensive wraparound services.

Healthcare employers donate to HealthWorks and pay for the costs associated with running their own CNA programs. Educators are also motivated to help HealthWorks students. For example, Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) arranged for free transportation for HealthWorks students to attend an LPN cohort at a campus 40 miles away. DMACC also covers tuition for students when the semester dates do not allow for the use of grant funds.

CIW and the Healthcare Sector Partnership are creating systems to allow HealthWorks and the resulting diversified healthcare workforce to remain in central Iowa. Parts of the program are now funded and managed by different organizations, and changes are made to training and education courses. Employers like UnityPoint Health and Broadlawns Medical Center have taken ownership of training programs that began as HealthWorks programs. Educators are adjusting course offerings and testing requirements to support students. DMACC revived the LPN steppingstone between CNA and RN certifications for students that either do not meet the testing

requirements or cannot make the commitment to three more years of school. With the LPN program, students can earn a certificate into a high-demand, high-paying career. Mercy College adjusted its testing requirements and teaching methods to make classes and campus supports better suited to English language learners. Signature Healthcare, a private healthcare education partner, added more hands-on learning and extra study labs for its CNA students. These long-term operational investments by the Healthcare Sector Partnership ensure HealthWorks will continue.

Case management is the critical component to HealthWorks' success. The one-on-one support participants receive does not stop after graduation. After graduating with an associate or bachelor's degree in nursing, a typical student needs \$1,000 to study and complete preparation courses, register with the Iowa Board of Nursing, and complete the NCLEX certification before becoming an RN. This process can take several months after graduation. HealthWorks case managers continue to provide encouragement and support, including wraparound services, during this time. Case managers connect all participants to study classes, provide resume help, and schedule interviews with healthcare employers. Case managers help each participant find a job at the location and with a schedule that works for them.

The Healthcare Sector Partnership is working together to solve the workforce shortage. The partnership is committed to creating and executing new solutions to attract and retain a skilled and diverse workforce. With UWCI serving as the backbone organization, the healthcare sector has access to community organizations that work with and support HealthWorks' targeted populations. Moreover, the successful execution of two federal grants and the subsequent award of another proves UWCI and its partners can successfully manage multi-year funding proposals.

The Healthcare Sector Partnership wants to engage more individuals at all levels of the HealthWorks career pathway. From direct care providers and dental assistants to certified medical assistants and pharmacy technicians, the central Iowa healthcare workforce needs workers. This proposed expansion of a successful workforce training program helps partners fill critical positions and helps individuals enter a high-quality healthcare career.