

LABOR AND MANAGEMENT IN HEALTHCARE

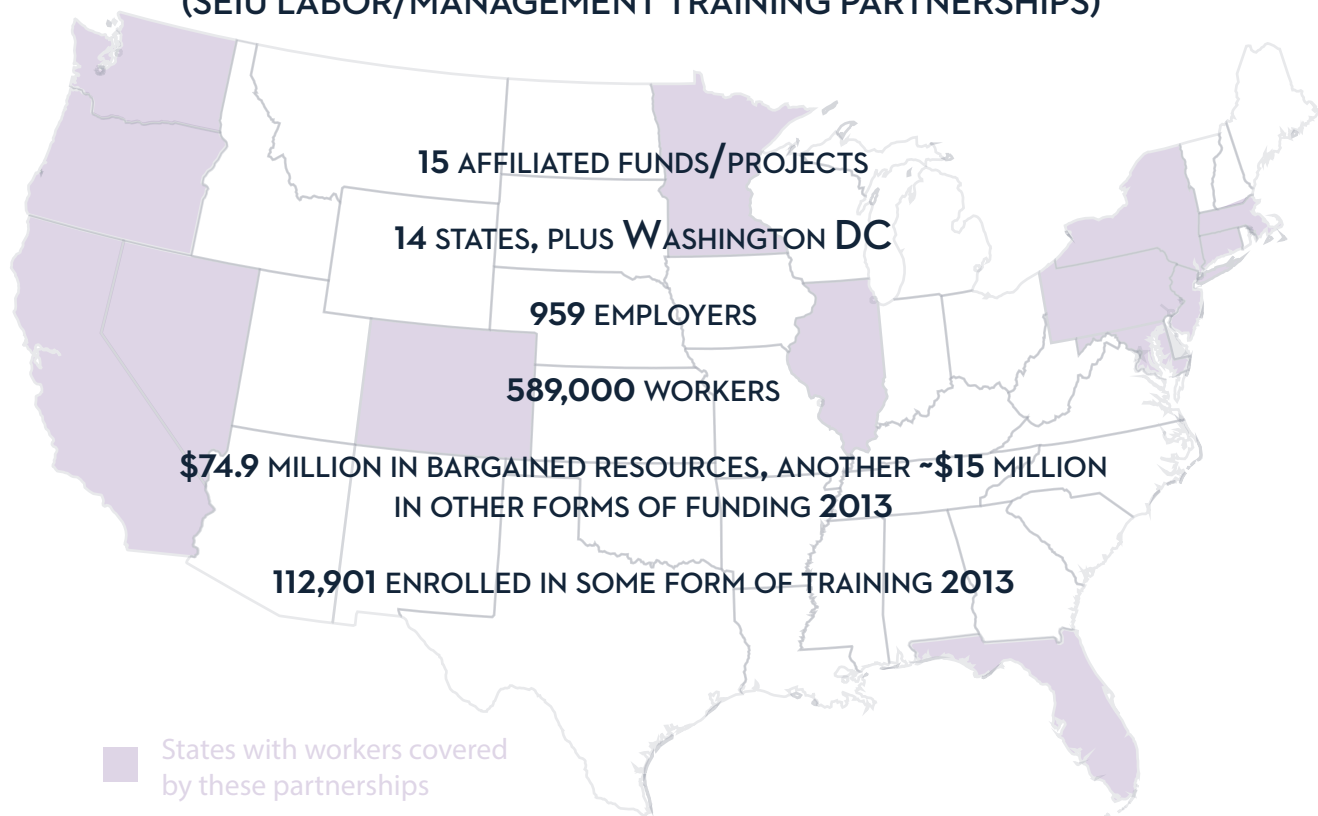
Partnership as a Force and Resource for Skills

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A WELL KEPT SECRET?

Across the country, Training Funds – joint programs of labor and management, bargained and administered at the local and regional level – have developed an impressive and growing core of work. In 1969, the first training fund for healthcare workers began in New York. Its success led to the development of new funds. In 2002, four labor/management partners came together to create a new organization focused on training and advancement for a diverse and committed front line workforce. The Healthcare Career Advancement Program (H-CAP) was born. From this core of SEIU locals and employers, mostly from the hospital sector, H-CAP and the related H-CAP Education Association (EA), have convened a network that has grown into a force with reach, experience, and impact not conceived of when the project began. The participating partnerships and training funds/organizations in aggregate now reach 900 healthcare providers in every setting of healthcare – from home care, to long term care, to clinics and hospitals – and nearly 600,000 workers from every occupational level in the healthcare industry.

HEALTHCARE TRAINING ACROSS THE NATION (SEIU LABOR/MANAGEMENT TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS)



MODEL PRACTICE: INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT, SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

These programs directly answer standing policy questions in workforce development.

Looking for **real industry engagement and investment**? Look to the \$75 million of bargained resources invested in training each year throughout this network. With nearly 1000 employers engaged in this work, that's serious industry buy-in. And with \$75 million of investment in workers, that's also considerable scale – almost twice the average state's federal resources for workforce investment.

Of equal importance, “employer engagement” is truly substantive in this model and means much more than a signature on a letter or participation on an advisory group. Employers are investors and, with labor leaders, co-creators and co-managers of these funds. They collaborate and engage to make the most of their training investments, advocating for changes in college practice that support working student success, building learning organizations and teams so that skills are applied and developed. The model is founded on employer engagement and as a result reaps significant benefits for workers, employers, and systems.

Beyond that, and also instructive in the national discussion on workforce development, in these projects the model also engages workers, not just employers. In fact, the model is of “industry engagement” – the **participation of worker representatives** and employers as equal partners. Like employers, unions are engaged in every aspect of establishing, defining, and managing these funds. This means that workers' interests are as central to and represented in training projects as employer interest. The projects consistently apply industry engagement and resources to training questions at the center of concerns of **both employers and workers**. There is plenty of work to be done where both interests are clear. And the independent worker perspective helps refine training design, build support for training among all workers, and develop higher standards of job quality throughout the projects.

Finally, throughout the network, H-CAP and the labor management training partnerships model the sustainable **infrastructure** that secures and supports industry engagement. Whatever name is given to this role – “intermediary” or “partnership” or “sector convener” – it is essential to helping make training work. The intermediary provides the capacity to identify interest and issues, and build common solutions to industry needs. But throughout

PERSPECTIVES

"The relationship between the union, the employer, and the fund is fundamentally different than anything that exists in the private or public sector...We are able to respond or react to the realities of the workplace and the economic environment."

- H-CAP Education Association Leader

the workforce system, sustainable strategic infrastructure of this sort remains too often an aspiration and too rarely a reality.

Infrastructure provides the foundation for every project. In most cases, the leadership and staff at Training Funds do the hard work of developing projects, supporting workers, and delivering on the joint interests identified by industry leaders. In some cases, especially in the home care sector, the union takes the lead, negotiating with the public sector for training funds to develop the workforce. Though the models are varied, the importance of this intermediating infrastructure is evident as a foundational aspect of the success of projects.

In sum, **H-CAP and the H-CAP EA convene an impressive network of healthcare workforce programs that deliver cutting edge training and infrastructure for working adults.** Projects deeply engage employers and significant private investment, and those key resources are deployed to build the skills of workers. Programs take this foundation and add the infrastructure of staff and resources to identify shared interest, develop projects, and monitor and improve training performance

Serious private sector resources, strong industry engagement, and sustainable intermediaries: these projects are at the forefront of model practice in workforce development.

TRAINING THAT WORKS FOR WORKERS

On the foundation of this model's infrastructure, projects and funds deliver real results for workers and employers. Here again, the work throughout this network generates impressive results, innovative models, and serious scale.

Each organization finds where employer and worker interest in training aligns and advances worker skills in accordance with that identified need. A major focus is moving front line workers through career pathways to higher skilled jobs, building bridges, where needed, to expand access to a diverse entry-level healthcare workforce. Sometimes the focus is on new skills for the existing workforce to do current jobs more effectively. In other cases, training might invest in communication, leadership, and teamwork skills to improve care quality. This work puts these programs at the forefront of innovation in workforce education and career pathways. Further, the work addresses the long-term interest of workers while supporting employer interests – training and skills are transferrable and put workers on a career pathway toward higher skilled positions.

Training innovations that work for working adults: these programs generate model practice and impressive results for workers and the healthcare industry.

Innovations that make training work include:

1. **Bridges** to help workers advance seamlessly from basic to occupational skills.
2. **Alternative admission and assessment** standards to ensure that capable students can get into career advancement programs.
3. **Cohort delivery models and wrap around supports** to help secure higher rates of program completion.
4. **Credit for prior learning** to accelerate paths to needed certifications.

Sometimes in partnership with colleges and sometimes on their own, these organizations are developing strategies at the forefront of emerging model practice for workforce development and education.

A SECRET NO LONGER

This work and practice has been developed in a distinct arena, often disconnected from policy and advocacy networks focused on educational innovation for working adults, stronger workforce development, and industry engagement. This lack of connection has been a detriment to both the network and the broader field of workforce development.

H-CAP has embarked on a project of bridging that gap. Our focus is to strengthen this national collaborative as a learning network for engaged employers and their union partners. We also intend to use that collaboration and the incredible and diverse practice throughout this network to build increasing understanding and awareness of this model and its potential. A broad swath of workforce development, education and training stakeholders at all levels of policy should be reached so that the work across this network is known widely. Finally we will amplify and extend this work and support the voices and interests of leaders from labor and management and training funds who have built these models as they engage in national policy discussions on these issues.

ABOUT H-CAP

H-CAP is a national organization of SEIU unions and healthcare employers who are partnering on workforce education and training. Its related organization, H-CAP Education Association, comprises 15 labor/management and labor-based training organizations. Both organizations are strongly committed to providing workplace skills and career pathways to their members/employees and bringing greater diversity into the healthcare professions. H-CAP works with its partners to disseminate best practices across the network, develop solutions to emerging issues, and create a more cohesive approach to policy issues.

ABOUT COWS

Based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, COWS is a national think-and-do tank that promotes “high road” solutions to social problems. These treat shared growth and opportunity, environmental sustainability, and resilient democratic institutions as necessary and achievable complements in human development. COWS is nonpartisan but values-based. We seek a world of equal opportunity and security for all.

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