



Health Workforce 2024 Listening Tour in Santa Cruz County: The Future of the Health Workforce Council

Prepared for

California Workforce Development Board,
High-Road Training Partnership Resilient Workforce Program

By

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Workforce Development Program

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Introduction

In March 2023, the Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County (HIP) was awarded a [High Road Training Partnerships \(H RTP\) Resilient Workforce Program \(RWP\)](#) (2023-2026) grant issued from the California Workforce Development Board, in partnership with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency for its Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council. HIP's workforce development program aims to build, strengthen, and diversify the Santa Cruz County health workforce with qualified individuals who best support and provide health services to the community. Our goals are to 1) increase opportunities for Santa Cruz County residents to advance in health professions and 2)

align and expand education and training through pipeline programs, work-based learning, and continued professional development.

HIP conducted its second listening tour over six months, interviewing 15 individuals representing 12 healthcare and training organizations within Santa Cruz County as part of HIP's continued commitment to embedding worker voice and community feedback into our work. This listening tour builds off the first listening tour conducted by HIP in 2022 during which six workforce tracks were identified by the 21 organizations that participated in the listening tour: behavioral health and health social workers, community health workers, nurses, medical assistants, physicians including pediatricians and family medicine, and surgery technicians (view report on HIP's [workforce webpage](#): *2022 Health Workforce Listening Tour in Santa Cruz County: Findings and Recommendations for the Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council*). The interviews aim to seek input on the effectiveness of the Health Workforce Council, discover what topics have not yet been addressed by the council, identify solutions, determine if the council should continue after March 2026 (when H RTP RWP funding ends), and, if so, what structure is recommended.

In partnership with the [Bay Area Community College Consortium \(BACCC\)](#), HIP explored various options to implement a surgical technician training program in the Monterey Bay region



(Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties). The listening tour included two interviews specifically focused on this goal (see Appendix C: Surgical Technician Interview Instrument); the findings are included in the report.

Executive Summary

Over six months, from March to August 2024, HIP conducted a listening tour to connect with partners and gain insight on how to best proceed with the Health Workforce Council. During this time a total of 12 empathy interviews were conducted with 15 representatives from 12 organizations: [Cabrillo College](#), [Center for Community Advocacy \(CCA\)](#), [Cradle to Career Santa Cruz County \(C2C\)](#), [Dominican Hospital - Family Medicine Residency Program](#), [Dominican Hospital - Outpatient Surgery Center](#), [Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance \(PVPSA\)](#), [Planned Parenthood Mar Monte](#), [Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency](#), [Santa Cruz County Office of Education](#), [Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center](#), [University of California, Santa Cruz \(UCSC\) Global and Community Health Program](#), and [Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education \(WASCAE\)](#).

This report provides a comprehensive overview of our findings, the Health Workforce Council's accomplishments to date, and a sustainability plan for the workforce development program incorporating HIP's new strategic plan and guiding principles.

Findings: What We Learned

Health Workforce Council Effectiveness

Participants expressed the benefit of attending the quarterly Health Workforce Council and monthly workgroup meetings, which allow them to make connections, network, learn about and from other programs across the community, and receive information about training and resources available.

The meetings provide a safe space with facilitators who engage participants in dialogue and allow them to bring up different topics identified by participants to address within workgroups.





The monthly workgroups have effectively offered the opportunity for information sharing, building synergy, building relationships, avoiding duplication of efforts, highlighting pipeline programs, and working on specific topics in a more integrative approach. The quarterly Health Workforce Council has effectively provided good presentation speakers, relevant and helpful topics, and data on health careers and the growth of pertinent health careers. The communication, outreach, and follow-up have been appreciated, with meeting minutes, recordings, and outcomes to review. Participants expressed that while in-person meetings are engaging for making connections, online meetings are preferable to accommodate scheduling; offering a balance of both opportunities twice a year is ideal.

Participants expressed that the challenge of attending quarterly Health Workforce Council and monthly workgroup meetings is limited bandwidth, time, and competing priorities within their busy schedules. Additionally, participants are volunteering their time to take on extra work and commit to participating while prioritizing their workload; meetings need to support the goals of partner organizations to justify attendance. To accommodate participants' busy schedules, HIP can consider hosting quarterly workgroup meetings instead of monthly workgroup meetings. The monthly workgroup challenges are the lack of continuity of participants and, in some cases, facilitators, to move projects forward to accomplish goals and to keep participants engaged with a wide range of topics; it is challenging to get participants motivated to volunteer and invest their time if there is no direct impact.

Health Workforce Needs

Participants outlined the following health workforce areas of focus for the next two years:

- **Continued Collaboration:** providing a convening for partners to share their work and learn how to collaborate; providing new knowledge and information at every meeting that is beneficial, with specific goals and focuses on local advocacy efforts (e.g., equitable housing, education, healthcare).
- **Expanding Clinical Placements:** address challenges with enrollment in programs, externship placements, and hiring after programs, by assisting with developing partnerships with training programs and employer connections for clinical placements across Santa Cruz County.



- **Home Health Aides (HHA):** employers expressed the need for home health aides, and in response, Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education (WASCAE) created a hospice aide course. However, enrollment in the course is low. Support is still needed to promote enrollment and increase the pipeline of home health aide workers.
- **Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) Program:** Santa Cruz County currently does not have an LVN program. For an educational institution to successfully implement one, it will need community partners to provide clinical placements to cohorts of students enrolled in the program.
- **Mental Healthcare for the Health Workforce:** healthcare providers experienced extreme strain and burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic, so supporting their mental health is a priority. As the pandemic has shifted to an endemic, it's important to prioritize and acknowledge healthcare providers' burnout, address exhaustion, and provide opportunities to discuss burnout and recovery.
- **Support Health Student Funding:** learn more about the [California Department of Health Care Access and Information \(HCAI\)](#) financial assistance and other funding opportunities to support grant applications that offer affordable options for health students, such as scholarships, internship stipends, fellowship funds, loan repayment programs, etc.

Health Workforce Council Sustainability

Participants would like the Health Workforce Council to continue convening quarterly for two to five more years or indefinitely. Feedback on how the council can continue its impact includes remaining a foundational convener of key stakeholders to provide collaboration and professional development opportunities, resource sharing, and presentations with guest speakers and experts from outside the community. It was suggested that stipends be offered to participants and facilitators to engage in the workgroups and the council to ensure the work continues.

The following projects were proposed to focus on: creating a master's program with a clinical program in behavioral health at UC Santa Cruz, identifying topics in addiction and street medicine that would be helpful for graduate medical education curriculum, partnering with organizations to showcase available work-based learning opportunities, and explore options for state-level advocacy and impact by connecting with appropriate associations.



Participants highlighted the following existing and emerging health careers to focus on: aging population healthcare providers, behavioral health careers, certified nursing assistant, community health workers/promotoras, home health aide, licenced vocational nurse, obstetrician, occupational therapist, optician assistant, PhD psychologist, physical therapist, physician, psychiatry, radiology technician, substance use disorder counselors, speech therapy, social worker, therapist.

Surgical Technologist Training Program



In March 2024, in response to the listening tour HIP conducted in 2022, the Bay Area Community College Consortium (BACCC) explored avenues to create a surgical technologist program within the California Community Colleges Monterey Bay subregion (Cabrillo, Monterey Peninsula, and Hartnell). The exploration team consisted of Hayley Mears, Senior Workforce Development Program Manager (HIP), and

three BACCC staff members: Jack Michael, K14 Pathway Coordinator for the Santa Cruz Cabrillo District; Bronwyn Moreno, Monterey Bay Subregional Director; and Nanette Solvason, Regional Director for Healthcare.

The nearest accredited option to the Monterey Bay subregion is Carrington College, a for-profit program that costs around \$45,000 for students to complete. While Skyline College, a California Community College, is more affordable, both options pose transportation and cost barriers for many students in Santa Cruz County. The team met with the following industry and educational partners: Dominican Hospital - Outpatient Surgery Center, Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center, Community College Career Education Deans and Associate Deans of the Monterey Bay subregion, and Skyline College to explore feasible options to develop a local surgical technologist program. From the collaboration, it was identified that each local surgery provider needs approximately one new surgical technologist per year. For a California Community College to organize a new cohort, a minimum of 20 students is needed for in-person instruction, and the governing board that accredits surgical technologist programs requires that class instruction take place in person, eliminating the option to create a remote



program hosted by Skyline College. With this information, the demand in Santa Cruz County is not justifiable to create a new program at Cabrillo College, and creating a subregional magnet program does not solve transportation obstacles for students within the subregion, given the expanse of the geographic area. Cabrillo, Monterey Peninsula, and Hartnell Community Colleges passed on creating a surgical technologist program at this time.

[Futuro Health](#), a nonprofit organization with education programs that enable diverse adult learners from all walks of life to transition successfully into health careers, recently launched a new Sterile and Surgical Technician program, which includes externship and apprenticeship opportunities. Futuro Health was invited to present at HIP's Health Workforce Council meeting in September 2024 and at HIP's executive leadership council meeting in October 2024; as a result, one of HIP's members, Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center, is pursuing a contract with Futuro Health's apprenticeship training program.

Health Workforce Council Accomplishments

Since its launch in June 2022, the Health Workforce Council has convened eight quarterly convenings with 291 total attendees and 96 workgroup convenings with 1,246 total attendees that fostered and supported the development of several health workforce outcomes with our



partners. During this time, HIP has been invited to present the Health Workforce Council's accomplishments at the following speaking engagements: [California Primary Care Association](#) Workforce Symposium (January 25, 2023), [California Workforce Association](#) Meeting of the Minds in Monterey Conference (September 6, 2023), [California Community College Association for Occupational Education](#) Fall Conference (October 19, 2023), and [California Primary Care Association](#) Workforce Symposium (March 7, 2024). These accomplishments include, but are not limited to, the following:

1440 Multiversity Healing Our Healthcare Heroes Retreat

In 2023 and 2024, HIP, in partnership with 1440 Multiversity, received grant funds totaling \$146,000 from Kaiser Permanente Northern California Fund for Health Education at the East



Bay Community Foundation to fund nurse scholarships to attend [1440 Multiversity's Healing Our Healthcare Heroes](#) retreat free of charge. HIP distributed the scholarships and registration, enrolling approximately 50 nurses in the retreat in 2023 and approximately 60 nurses in the retreat in 2025.

Cabrillo College Apprenticeship Programs

With funding from the [California Community College California Apprenticeship Initiative](#) grant, Cabrillo College launched its first registered apprenticeship program for community health workers in August 2024. It has since enrolled 18 apprentices with five employers. The Health Workforce Council convenes the advisory committee for this program. Additionally, the Cabrillo College nursing program has secured a California Apprenticeship Initiative planning grant to develop registered apprenticeships for registered nurses, set to launch in the fall of 2025.

Cabrillo College Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Program

A certified nursing assistant program at Cabrillo College is being proposed to address a critical workforce need by preparing students for entry-level healthcare roles in a time of increasing demand for skilled caregivers. With a growing aging population and ongoing staffing shortages, this program provides an accessible pathway into the nursing profession while supporting local healthcare facilities. The program will offer students hands-on training, an industry-aligned curriculum, and a direct route to employment in healthcare, helping them build a strong foundation for career advancement.

HIP connected Cabrillo College with Kaiser Permanente to submit a funding proposal (currently pending approval) to help cover essential program costs, including instructor salaries, student support services, and necessary equipment and supplies. This investment will enhance student success, increase program capacity, and ensure high-quality training that aligns with industry needs. Once funds are approved, the program is set to start in the fall 2026 semester.

Clinical Placement Mapping

To better track clinical placement opportunities in Santa Cruz County, the Health Workforce Council developed a clinical placement mapping resource, a comprehensive effort to document current clinical placement opportunities within the county. This project was initiated by Dr. Cal Gordon, a monthly workgroup facilitator, connecting with healthcare leaders for their input. 12 organizations were contacted, and 10 responses were documented to create a chart of



available clinical placement opportunities with 15 health pathway programs identified seeking placements, enabling the Health Workforce Council to identify gaps, areas of need, and opportunities for collaboration.

Health Career Expo

In 2023, HIP, in partnership with [Your Future Is Our Business \(YFIQB\)](#) and Cabrillo College, hosted its first-ever Health Career Expo for high school and college students across Santa Cruz County. Approximately 135 students from the following high schools attended the event: Costanoa, Delta, Diamond Tech Institute, Pajaro Valley, San Lorenzo Valley, Santa Cruz County Alternate Education, and Scotts Valley. Students had the opportunity to meet and speak with 25 employers and training programs to learn more about health career options and tour Cabrillo College's allied health facilities and labs.

Building on the event's success, a second expo was held in November 2024 with approximately 142 students from the following high schools: Costanoa, Delta, Diamond Tech Institute, El Nido, Harbor, Pajaro Valley, San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley, and E.A. Hall Middle School, with 22 exhibitors. Employers and training programs that participated at both expos: Cabrillo College, California State University, Monterey Bay, Central California Alliance for Health, Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley, County of Santa Cruz, Dientes Community Dental Care, Encompass Community Services, Front Street Inc., Golden State Orthopedics and Spine, Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County, Health Projects Center, Hospice of Santa Cruz County, Janus of Santa Cruz, Montage Health, Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance, Salud Para La Gente, Santa Cruz Community Health Centers, Santa Cruz County Office of Education, The Camp Recovery Center, University of California, Santa Cruz, Watsonville Aptos Santa Cruz Adult Education, Watsonville Community Hospital, Wellpath, and Youth Recovery Connections. Planning is underway for the next expo in November 2025.

Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County Community Forums

In partnership with the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board, HIP hosted its 2022 Community Forum, *Growing our Own: Cultivating Health Career Pathways in Santa Cruz County*. With over 120 attendees, HIP's Community Forum united and engaged the greater Santa Cruz County community in meaningful conversation around strategies for improving the health workforce. The forum aimed to re-energize community partnerships and engagement in HIP's recently launched Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council to increase opportunities for Santa Cruz County residents to advance in health professions and align and expand



education and training through pipeline programs, work-based learning, and continued professional development of incumbent workers.

Subsequent forums were held in 2023, focused on the Health Workforce Council's achievements and the plan for continuing health workforce projects over the next three years with funding from the California Workforce Development Board High Road Training Partnership Resilient Workforce Program grant and in 2024 recognition of HIP's 20th Anniversary, *Celebrating 20 years of Collaboration*. View more information on HIP's [past forums webpage](#).

Health Workforce Resources

Several health workforce resources have been developed through the collaboration of the Health Workforce Council's monthly workgroups. These include the following, which are accessible on HIP's [workforce webpage](#):

- **Community Health Worker/Promoters (CHW/P) Resource Guide:** the guide includes job classification resources, employer job classifications, communities of practice, funding options, training options, reports, resources, and webinars.
- **Community Health Worker/Promoters (CHW/P) Career Pathway Flyers:** provided in English and Spanish, these flyers provide a career snapshot and include information on how to pursue a CHW certificate from Cabrillo College, average annual salary, hourly wages, as well as local employers who hire CHWs.
- **Medical Assistant (MA) Externship Guide:** the guide includes training programs, onboarding resources, supervision and mentorship resources, how to improve students' experience, mock interview examples, certification and hiring processes, job descriptions, talent acquisition and onboarding resources, and additional resources and reports.
- **Nurse Financial Resource Guide:** provides current and post-grad nursing students with a snapshot of local assistance in affordable housing, scholarship opportunities, and loan repayment programs.



Home Health Aid Certificate Program

With employer feedback and support identifying an instructor from [Hospice of Santa Cruz County](#), Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education's (WASCAE) created a new home health aide program, which launched in January 2024 providing the opportunity for certified nurse assistants to become [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) certified to work for an agency that provides non-medical, supportive in-home care (under the supervision of a registered nurse and according to a care plan). Students will learn how to provide: personal care, exercise, ambulation, transfer, and nutrition services for clients in their homes.

Medical Terminology Course

The Health Workforce Council identified a gap in health career technical education courses offered to high school students in the North County area, convening partners to create a new medical terminology course that began in August 2024 for five high schools (Coast Redwood, Highlands, Oasis, San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley) serving the North County area with dual enrollment at Cabrillo College; 14 students enrolled in the first course. In addition to Medical Terminology, the course incorporates current events related to medicine, hands-on learning opportunities in the lab, and technical skills related to the healthcare profession (ie, infection control, vital signs, etc.). The course has been renewed for the 2025-2026 academic year with two semester sessions and is approved for dual-enrollment; this is a success as dual-enrollment ensures institutionalization of the course at Cabrillo College.

National Community Health Worker Week Proclamation

Inspired by collaboration within the Monterey Bay Community Health Worker Collaborative, HIP in partnership with the Cabrillo College Community Health Worker Program, and Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, presented at the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors meeting on August 28th, 2023 a proclamation: *AUGUST 28- SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 AS NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS WEEK IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY* (the proclamation can be viewed within the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors [Regular Meeting 8/22/2023](#)). Planning is underway to present another proclamation in August 2025.

National Nurse Week Proclamations

Inspired by collaboration within the Santa Cruz County Nursing Workforce Council, HIP in partnership with the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board, Dignity Health - Dominican Hospital, Cabrillo College Nursing Program, and Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, presented at the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors meeting May 9th, a



proclamation: [MAY 6-12, 2023 AS NATIONAL NURSES WEEK IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY](#).

Another proclamation was issued May 6-12, 2024, to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors on April 30th, 2024 (the proclamation can be viewed within the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors [Regular Meeting 4/30/2024](#)).

Registered Dental Assisting Program

The Santa Cruz County Office of Education, in partnership with [Dientes Community Dental Care](#), launched a new apprenticeship in their [Dental Assisting Program](#). The apprenticeship program began its first cohort of eight students in August 2024. It is designed to bridge the gap between education, training, and employment to provide a seamless pathway into the dental industry. Supported by a \$1.02 million grant from the California Apprenticeship Initiative and funding from the Santa Cruz Workforce Development Board and Sutter Health, the program is an innovative model that combines paid, on-the-job training with tuition-free classroom instruction, enabling participants to earn while they learn. The first cohort will be graduating in May 2025; applications for the second cohort (2025-2026) are expected to open early in 2025.

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Advocacy

The Santa Cruz County Nursing Workforce Council has been convening since August 2022 to identify the priority areas of focus for expanding the nursing workforce in the county and inform the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors to invest in effective, sustainable, and equity-focused health workforce infrastructure for the future of Santa Cruz County to grow its health workforce. A collaborative letter was sent to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors in April 2025 that addresses the nursing workforce shortage and high cost of living, advocates for healthcare workforce housing and for the Department of California's Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) to redefine the Song-Brown loan repayment eligibility criteria, support funding for HIP to convene the Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium, and recognition during the upcoming National Nurses Week, May 6 - 12, 2025; this week highlights how a healthy nursing workforce is essential to healthcare and how caring for nurses strengthens economies and communities health.

Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council Reports

Over three months in mid-2022, HIP conducted an empathy interview listening tour with 21 organizations to identify priorities for the Health Workforce Council and determine the focus for the health workforce tracks. The *2022 Health Workforce Listening Tour in Santa Cruz County*:



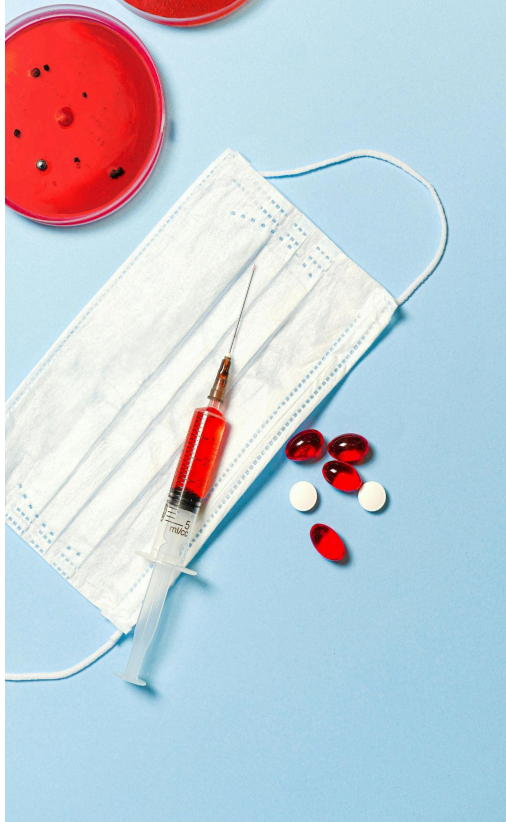
Findings and Recommendations for the Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council report provides recommendations for six identified health workforce tracks, outlines findings and learnings, challenges and needs, solutions to consider, input on structuring the Health Workforce Council and embedding equity into the council's work.

After launching the Health Workforce Council and convening for one year, the *Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council: 2023 Workforce Report and Recommendations* report provides a comprehensive gap analysis on the six identified health workforce tracks and recommendations from each monthly Health Workforce Council workgroup. A few highlights from these recommendations include the incubation of the Health Career Expos, engaging with 1440 Multiversity to provide the Healing Our Healthcare Heroes retreat for the Santa Cruz County nursing workforce, advising the [California Workforce Association \(CWA\)](#) articulating career pathway for medical assistant, supporting the development of apprenticeships in Cabrillo College's Community Health Worker Program, identifying current initiatives underway to recruit and develop a pipeline for more primary care physicians and nurse practitioners in Santa Cruz County, and the continued urge from all workgroups to continue meeting regularly. The reports are available on HIP's [workforce webpage](#).

Schwartz Rounds Implementation

The Health Workforce Council aims to identify strategies to improve job quality and, through research and partner input, recommends that organizations implement [Schwartz Rounds](#). Schwartz Rounds program offers healthcare providers a regularly scheduled time during their fast-paced work lives to openly and honestly discuss the social and emotional issues they face in caring for patients and families, including moral injury. The premise is that healthcare workers can better make personal connections with patients and colleagues when they have greater insight into their responses and feelings.

This program was launched at Dignity Health - Dominican Hospital in June 2024. It will continue with quarterly sessions that allow staff to share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings on thought-provoking topics drawn from actual patient cases. The program also brings in panelists from diverse disciplines to participate in the sessions, including physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, allied health professionals, and chaplains. After listening to a panel's presentation on an identified case or topic, healthcare workers are invited to share their perspectives on the case and broader related issues. To date, the feedback from Dominican Hospital employees has been positive.



Health Workforce Council Sustainability Plan

This Year

HIP's HRTWP RWP funding expires in March 2026. In our last year of funding, in addition to hosting five more quarterly Health Workforce Council meetings, the workforce development program is committed to focusing efforts in the following areas:

Engage with the Central Coast K-16 Regional Collaborative

The [Central Coast K-16 Regional Collaborative](#) is a collective impact initiative of K-12, Community College, California State University, the University of California, Santa Cruz, and industry partners coming together to address long-standing educational and economic inequities in the region. HIP's work aligns with the

collaborative goal of supporting the implementation of an equitable education-to-career pathway in healthcare. HIP plans to attend the collaboration's convenings later this year, learning about each partner's work and progress achieved through the collaboration and identifying areas to support work-based learning in healthcare pathways.

Continue Monterey Bay Community Health Worker Collaborative

The Monterey Bay Community Health Worker Collaborative will continue to fill gaps by providing educational institutions and employers opportunities to dialogue, further alignment with Cabrillo College's Community Health Worker Advisory Committee and Cradle 2 Career's Community Health Leaders to eliminate silos and improve awareness in the profession, provide relevant labor market and gap analysis information, foster employer engagement in recruitment and incorporate worker voice in retention strategies and explore partnerships to drive systems change in workforce such as advocacy for certification standards that align with Medi-Cal, connecting with the Central Coast K-16 Regional Collaborative, and utilizing the



[California Department of Health Care Services Providing Access and Transforming Health \(PATH\) Technical Assistance Marketplace](#) to provide trainings that support the profession.

Additionally, the collaborative will support National Community Health Worker Awareness Month with the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors' proclamation in August 2025, engage with UC Santa Cruz's Cultivating Community Health Campo-Sano Conference in September 2025 and continue to research options to implement a centralized platform for community health worker recruitment; this may include surveying recent community health worker graduates and employers to identify recruitment and retention barriers and identify best practices.

Convene Health Career Pathways Committee

Combining the existing monthly workgroup's efforts around healthcare work-based learning opportunities for health career pathways (i.e., internships, externships, clinical placements, apprenticeships, etc), to continue the Health Workforce Council's work with regular convenings to develop pipeline pathways and showcase local training programs for medical assistants, and primary care physicians to local healthcare employers. This effort includes continuing to partner with Your Future Is Our Business (YFIOB) and Cabrillo College to provide the Health Career Expo and expand partnerships with work-based learning programs, such as [Health Career Connections \(HCC\)](#), [Greater Opportunities through Adult Learning \(GOAL\)](#), and [Workforce Santa Cruz County](#), to increase outreach to underserved students that provides exposure to health careers.

Convene Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium

HIP and the [Hospital Council of Northern and Central California](#) are launching a Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium this year. The consortium will include training programs and employers across the Monterey Bay region (San Benito, Santa Cruz, Monterey counties) to create a process to streamline the system across training programs and employers for clinical placements, collaborate to improve efficiency in clinical placements, expand the availability of placements, and support the development of expanding regional nursing programs and the nursing workforce. The first meeting is scheduled for June 4th, during which time, the consortium will determine future meeting cadence.

Address Health Workforce Burnout and Mental Health

In alignment with our H RTP RWP grant deliverables and feedback from the listening sessions, HIP is planning an event for the health workforce in Santa Cruz County that addresses burnout



and mental health. Leveraging our partnerships with HIP members for fundraising and the Cabrillo College Nursing Program as a co-host, we aim to provide a half-day event focused on the well-being of healthcare workers, covering topics such as emotional awareness, work-life balance, finding joy in the workplace, etc. The event is scheduled for October 3rd, 2025 and will feature a keynote presentation by John Chuck, MD, a family physician and wellness consultant for healthcare professionals, and Joseph Clements, a mindfulness and emotional resilience coach.

Looking Ahead (2025-2028)

HIP is embarking on its 2025-2028 strategic plan, a forward-thinking framework designed to guide the organization over the next four years. HIP's strategic goals are the result of a comprehensive and collaborative planning process. From rigorous environmental data analysis to the invaluable input of diverse stakeholders - including our Board and Executive Committee, HIP council, staff, and community leaders - the three essential goals reflect a shared vision, commitment to collective action, and strategies for continued workforce development are outlined in the following areas:

Inclusive and Engaged Partnerships

HIP's membership-based structure has established deep, institutionalized relationships with 23 member organizations, alongside new strategic partnerships with entities such as the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, UC Santa Cruz, and the [Santa Cruz Monterey Medical Association \(SCMMA\)](#). This includes expanding HIP's membership to be inclusive of all leaders in the evolving healthcare ecosystem while deepening the engagement and active participation of existing members. This year, HIP is exploring membership options for health training partners [California State University, Monterey Bay \(CSUMB\)](#), and [Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education \(WASCAE\)](#) to join HIP's council and board.

The workforce development program will continue to identify new partners and enable all partners to participate meaningfully through responsive forums, at different levels and on various strategic issues. HIP's partnerships will focus on building a sustainable, culturally competent workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, ensuring that anti-racist practices are embedded in governance, decision-making, and resource allocation. HIP will further its engagement with the [California Health Professions Consortium](#), a statewide consortium of organizations invested in increasing diversity in California's health workforce,



and with [Jobs for the Future \(JFF\)](#), a national organization designing solutions, scaling best practices, influencing policy and action, and investing in innovation to transform U.S. education and workforce systems to drive economic success for people, businesses, and communities. HIP's workforce development program team joined [JFF's 75 Million Network](#) in a commitment to advancing quality jobs.

Additionally, as the Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium is developed, HIP plans to engage with [HealthImpact](#), a nursing workforce and policy center committed to increasing diversity in nursing, the [California Nurses Association](#) and local representatives from the Caregivers and Healthcare Employees Union (CHEU), the [National Union of Healthcare Workers \(NUHW\)](#) and the [Service Employees International Union, Local 521 \(SEIU 521\) Nurse Alliance of California \(NA of CA\)](#) to ensure worker representatives partner with the consortium.

Equitable Access to Care

The workforce development program will expand programs and partnerships to build a more sustainable, culturally congruent, and anti-racist local health workforce to reduce health disparities through collective action to overcome barriers to healthcare that impede optimal health. This includes addressing racial disparities in access to health education, providing mentorship for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) healthcare professionals, and ensuring that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds have opportunities for leadership roles.

Integration of Anti-Racist Practices

Scale infrastructure for integrating anti-racist policies and practices within HIP and its member organizations. The workforce development program will support HIP in identifying and promoting training for anti-racist leadership and learning, as well as lead training and peer networks to support members in championing anti-racist initiatives, policies, and practices.

HIP's implementation of these goals will rely on the following guiding principles:

- **Connection:** fostering relationships, active listening, communication, and integration between various parts of HIP, our stakeholders, and the community.
- **Initiative:** proactive actions of individuals and teams who take the lead in driving change, solving problems, and pursuing opportunities.



- **Resourcefulness:** abilities of individuals and teams to effectively utilize available resources, such as time, skills, knowledge, and tools, while creatively overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of HIP's workforce development program beyond the H RTP RWP funds, we are developing a robust, multi-pronged strategy that focuses on securing diverse funding sources, institutionalizing partnerships, and maintaining programmatic continuity. To bolster the foundations and reach of our programs, HIP is committed to securing funding that directly addresses historical inequities in resource allocation and supports the improvement of pathways to health careers. HIP's funding strategy will prioritize opportunities that advance racial equity, support marginalized populations, and enhance workforce development efforts. HIP will seek out grants, philanthropic contributions, and private-sector investments that align with our anti-racist and equity-driven mission.

Additionally, in alignment with the [California Jobs First Uplift Central Coast Regional Plan Part II Report](#), a U.S. Economic Development Administration formally accepted Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS), HIP's workforce development program will continue to enhance job quality, access, and equity within the Santa Cruz County health sector by identifying and supporting healthcare career pathways, increasing partnerships between educational institutions and healthcare providers, and highlighting early career awareness programs, such as Your Future Is Our Business (YFI OB).

The strategy includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- **State Funding:** leverage HIP's partnership with the Central Coast Regional K-16 Collaborative to identify future grant applications, reapply for future H RTP RWP funds, submit a proposal in March 2026 for [The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development \(GO-Biz\) California Jobs First](#) Regional Investment Initiative (RII) Implementation Phase; investing in the healthcare workforce of the future in alignment with [California Jobs First](#) State Economic Blueprint.
- **Social Bond Funding:** apply for a three-year capacity-building grant with Health Career Connection Regional Health Workforce Initiative Network to strengthen and expand the capacity of HIP's workforce development program to advance actionable solutions to meet employer health workforce needs.



- **Braided Funding:** develop independent contracts with [Workforce Santa Cruz County](#) and other local organizations, expand HIP membership fees, and implement Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium fees if needed to support existing programs.
- **Leverage Existing Funding:** incorporating workforce themes within HIP's existing funded programs such as programming for community health workers in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Community of Practice, and anti-racist workforce training to support the implementation of enhanced care management and community support services via HIP's workforce vendor role in the [California Department of Health Care Services Providing Access and Transforming Health \(PATH\) Technical Assistance Marketplace](#).
- **Neutral Convener:** HIP's ability to convene diverse stakeholders in neutral, inclusive spaces is a key strength, especially in workforce development. HIP will continue to serve as an intermediary, bringing health training programs and healthcare employers together to collaborate. To continue this vital work, HIP will explore funding opportunities to sustain its crucial role as a neutral facilitator. HIP is uniquely positioned to address the need and advance efforts to expand the nursing workforce by launching the Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium, as the consortium convener cannot be an employer or a training site, thus strengthening our role and requests for funding.

At the core of HIP's sustainability plan is our unwavering commitment to community-led solutions. HIP will continue to prioritize the co-design of the workforce development program, incorporating workers' voices and those of communities that are disproportionately affected by systemic inequities. This approach ensures that the voices and expertise of those most impacted are directly involved in the development of program strategies, funding priorities, and workforce development projects.



Conclusion

Over the past few years, the Santa Cruz County Health Workforce Council has made significant strides in strengthening the health workforce across the region and successfully promoting collaboration, networking, and



resource sharing. Key accomplishments include supporting the launch of Cabrillo College's Community Health Worker Program and Dientes Community Dental Care apprenticeships, and hosting two successful Health Career Expos. HIP also led initiatives providing nurse wellness scholarships to the 1440 Multiversity Healing Our Healthcare Heroes retreat and developed resources such as career pathway flyers, externship, and resource guides. The Health Workforce Council's efforts have also extended to advocacy work, such as the presentation of proclamations for National Community Health Worker and Nurse Week in Santa Cruz County, and creating a home health aide certificate program. The continued partnership with key stakeholders and local healthcare providers has bolstered Santa Cruz County's health workforce pipeline, addressing critical needs like the nursing and primary care workforce and clinical placements.

Key focus areas for the next two years include expanding clinical placements, addressing workforce shortages, for example, home health aides and licensed vocational nurses, and supporting healthcare providers' mental health and health students' financial aid. Moving forward, sustaining the Health Workforce Council's role as a convener and exploring new projects will ensure long-term workforce development success. Looking ahead, HIP is focused on ensuring the continued success and sustainability of the workforce development program beyond the expiration of its HRTP RWP funding in 2026. The Health Workforce Council will focus on engaging with the Central Coast K-16 Regional Collaborative, convening the Health Career Pathways Committee, and launching the Monterey Bay Nursing Clinical Education Consortium to enhance local health workforce pipelines. Sustainability goals include expanding equitable access to care, integrating anti-racist practices, and deepening partnerships with stakeholders, associations, and unions.

As HIP embarks on its 2025-2028 strategic plan, the organization remains steadfast in its mission to build a sustainable, culturally competent, and diverse health workforce. By deepening partnerships, expanding outreach, and promoting inclusive practices, HIP will continue to pave the way for future generations of healthcare professionals. The organization's forward-thinking approach will not only address the immediate health workforce challenges but will also drive long-term transformation within the region's healthcare system. With a focus on collaboration, equity, and sustainability, HIP is poised to continue making meaningful strides toward a more inclusive, accessible, and effective health workforce in Santa Cruz County and the Monterey Bay region.



Appendices

Appendix A: List of Interviewees

Patrick Meyer, LCSW, Cabrillo College

Norma Ahedo, Center for Community Advocacy

Julio Neri Andrade, Cradle to Career Santa Cruz County

Oriana Nolan, MPH, Dominican Hospital - Family Medicine Residency Program

Walt Mills, MD, Dominican Hospital - Family Medicine Residency Program

Leilani Salimone, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CNOR, Dominican Hospital - Outpatient Surgery Center

Jasmine Najera, LCSW, Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance

Danielle Harik, MD, Planned Parenthood Mar Monte

Andrea Calloway, MS, Planned Parenthood Mar Monte

Cal Gordon, MD, Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency

Sarah Dahlen, RN, Santa Cruz County Office of Education

Alexis Lauderdale, RN, MSN, DNP, Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center

Matt Sparke, Ph.D, University of California, Santa Cruz

Grant Hartzog, Ph.D, MD, University of California, Santa Cruz

Connie Williams, RN, BSN, PHN, MS, Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education

Appendix B: Interview Instrument

Effectiveness

1. If you attended any of the quarterly Health Workforce Council convenings what have been the benefits and/or impact?
2. What barriers or challenges may have prevented you from attending or fully engaging with the council? What possible solutions could we consider?
3. If you attended any workgroup meetings in the following workforce areas: behavioral health/health social workers, community health workers, medical assistants, nurses, and primary care/pediatrician, which workgroup(s) did you attend and what benefits and/or impact have you noticed?
4. Thinking specifically about the workgroups, what barriers or challenges may have prevented you from attending or fully engaging with the workgroups? What possible solutions could we consider?
5. Please share your thoughts on the effectiveness of the council and workgroups.



6. If you haven't engaged with the council and/or workgroups, we would love to learn why.

Needs

7. How might we create more inclusivity for participants to engage with the council and workgroups in meaningful ways?
8. What healthcare workforce topics, such as gaps, needs, challenges, and opportunities, should the council focus on in the next two years?

Sustainability

9. Are there any other existing or emerging health careers we should consider focusing on workforce development beginning in 2026 and why?
10. Describe any workforce assets and resources your organization can share with HIP to aid in sustaining the council and its workgroups.
11. The council's two overarching goals are 1) to increase opportunities for Santa Cruz County residents to advance in health professions, and 2) to align and expand education and training through pipeline programs, work-based learning, and continued professional development. With these goals in mind, how could the council make the greatest impact?
12. To effectively achieve these goals, how long should the council continue convening?

Referrals

13. HIP's mission is rooted in the improvement: of systems, quality, relationships, and access to care. To ensure the council is in alignment with this mission, is there another person or organization that HIP should consider including in the listening tour and inviting to the council?

Appendix C: Surgical Technician Interview Instrument

Employer Hiring Needs & Requirements

1. What are your hiring needs for Surgical Technologists and/or Surgical Technicians? How many new employees will you hire annually in both these positions? Please do not over-project.
2. What are the hiring requirements for both positions (e.g. trained in an accreditation program, AST accreditation, A.S. degree, etc.)? Is there a licensing requirement to hire (e.g. Certified Surgical Technologist)?
3. What are the beginning wages upon hire for both positions?



Training Program Needs

4. It's expensive for community colleges to start a surgical training program - can your organization support with equipment donations or host a cohort at your facility?
5. To develop a surgical training program, clinical placements are needed - can your organization commit to clinical placements? If yes, how many students per semester?
6. To develop a surgical training program, faculty are needed to supervise clinical placements - can your organization provide a qualified staff member to do this (i.e. release an employee for dedicated time as a volunteer training program instructor, while still being paid by your organization).
7. Describe any additional workforce assets and resources your organization can provide to aid in developing a surgical training program.

Referrals

8. Is there another person or organization that should be included in the effort to establish a surgical training program?