

Health Care Workforce Strategic Plan Advisory Group - Minutes

Wednesday, June 12, 2024, 10:00 AM

Attendees: Wendy Trafton, Heri Troche, Suzanne Tremblay, Geoffrey Battista, Elizabeth Cote, Stephanie Pagliuca, Mary Kate Mohlman, Jessa Barnard, Anne Bilodeau, Patrick Gallivan, Jill Olson, Johanna Beliveau, Luca Fernandez, Jerry Baake, Betsy Hassan, Mary Anne Sheahan, Devon Greene, Rebecca Kapsalis, Beth Demers, Freedman Healthcare: Janice Bourgault, Tanya Bernstein and Sarah Lindberg

General Updates:

Wendy Trafton began by introducing the new Health Care Workforce Director, Suzanne Tremblay. Suzanne introduced herself and let everyone know that she will be reaching out to schedule meet and greets.

Health Care Workforce Data Center Update - Presentation by Freedman HealthCare:

Heri Troche introduced the Freedman HealthCare team.

Tanya Bernstein from Freedman presented an overview of the Health Care Workforce Data Center Best Practices Report and the three phases of their work with the State of Vermont's Health Care Workforce Data Center.

Phase One: An environmental scan of similar healthcare workforce data initiatives nationwide, and other integrated data systems that may not have a health care workforce data focus. Freedman facilitated a series of weekly meetings with the HHS team and, where appropriate, other national programs. The focus was to understand best practices for the data being integrated. They asked about the challenges, lessons learned, advice from other states undertaking a similar effort, types of analytics they've been able to produce, and next steps. The best practices report is a summary of those meetings. Please see report for specifics.

Note: From this effort Freedman is convening a national consortium of health care workforce data leaders.

Phase Two: This stakeholder engagement phase is happening now. Vermont stakeholders are sharing their vision for the Health Care Workforce Data Center such as defining their business needs and use cases, sharing their concerns and ideas for the architecture and data governance.

Phase Three: This phase will occur in the fall and winter and will result in two planning documents. The first is a 5-year implementation plan, which will include considerations for what data can be integrated in the short, medium and long term. The second is the analytics and reporting plan.

Questions Regarding Data Center asked by Attendees:

Do other workforce centers capture expansion of clinical placements or student enrollment growth and how? Is there a way the Data Center for Vermont could capture that so we can set some measurable goals?

Staff highlighted that Washington has functionality in this area and Vermont is interested in collecting that data as part of Data Center operations.

Update on Workforce Incentive Programs and Shortage Designations- Luca Fernandez:

The Vermont Department of Health (VDH) received five Covid-related one-time appropriations that were not funded again this state fiscal year. Those are: Emergency Grants to Support Nurse Faculty and Staff, Vermont Health Care Professional Loan Repayment Program, Nurse Faculty Forgivable Loan Program, Nurse Faculty Loan Repayment Program, Vermont Mental Health Professional Forgivable Loan Incentive Program. While new appropriations weren't made, some of them still have funding available.

Liz Cote added: The two educational loan repayment programs that are ending are programs administered by AHEC. Both of those programs are two-year grant projects ending December 2024. AHEC continues to make awards from those, though the bulk of the one-time funding has been disbursed. We knew there was a strong chance they would end. Years ago, there was a state funded nurse faculty loan repayment program that was not continued but was reinstated with COVID-funding for these two years. We will recommend they continue in the future but there are also several federal programs to help with that population. For the SLRP program, the only new eligible profession is medical technicians. The other professions included in the SLRP program, nurse practitioners, nurses, physicians, etc., will continue to have a program in Vermont through the pre-existing educational loan repayment program. Without the added COVID funding, the existing program becomes more competitive because there are fewer dollars to award. The professions and professionals that were able to benefit from the program still have Vermont funded options, except for the medical technicians.

A participant noted that they heard about the continued need for medical technicians and asked if there's a reason why it wasn't brought to the legislature this year? Liz Cote noted that the program is still underway and legislative changes were necessary for implementation this year. She noted that there is a lack of data about this workforce, and they are not required to be registered or licensed in Vermont which made it challenging to figure out how many of these professionals are in state, where they work, who they are and how to reach them. She noted that the need for development of the program may have played a role in not adding new appropriations to continue funding.

A participant asked about how this intersects with increases in HRSA funding and Liz Cote noted that they are different programs.

Update on Nursing Grants- Wendy Trafton:

Staff will be collecting annual reports from Nursing Apprenticeship and Pipeline Program and Nurse Preceptor Program grantees in August. Unfortunately, funding is not available for a second round of the Nursing Apprenticeship and Pipeline Program which was originally anticipated for this year. We were able to award over \$5 million last year. We'll be providing

more information on our website and getting the message out to organizations that are highly interested in this.

Other Discussion:

Wendy Trafton noted we received a request to discuss a website with job openings and information about all the state initiatives. Department of Labor operates job links and there's a resource page on state initiatives: [Vermont JobLink - Vermont JobLink](#) & [Loan Repayment & Scholarships | Vermont Department of Health \(healthvermont.gov\)](#)

Participant noted that the website/resource page is informative, but it would be helpful if it was tailored towards students and employers and be more user friendly. Other feedback I received from some HR directors- it'd be great to have the links in same place.

Staff suggested we convene a subgroup to discuss how to improve information available online for both students and employers.

Discussed the priority needs and barriers that participants are seeking to address during the next legislative session.

Meeting Wrap & Next Steps:

- The next committee meeting will be held on July 31st, 2024 at 10am as originally planned.
- Please email Suzanne with any priority needs and barriers participants are seeking to address through the next session or other agenda items you wish to discuss at the next meeting, by July 26th.
- Convene a subgroup to discuss how to improve information available online for both students and employers. Please let Suzanne know if you are interested.
- Suzanne will also be reaching out separately to schedule meetings with the advisory group members.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne Tremblay

Health Care Workforce Development Director