



The Evolving Role of Expert Partnerships in Healthcare Workforce Management



Objective

This white paper, commissioned by Ingenovis Health's Workforce Solutions team for the benefit of healthcare administrators building optimized workforces and developed through surveys of key healthcare workforce leaders, explores how healthcare organizations can navigate current workforce challenges through leveraging external expertise. It will present a narrative of transformation, emphasizing key themes such as technology, transparency, innovation and the shift toward self-sufficiency in workforce strategy.

Healthcare leaders interviewed for this report:





Carmelita Riley, Esq. RN, MHA, FACHE

Senior Director of System Staffing

Carmelita is a seasoned healthcare leader with extensive experience in nursing operations, workforce management, and clinical operations. She currently serves as Senior Director of System Staffing at Houston Methodist, where she leads innovative strategies to optimize staffing efficiency and enhance workforce solutions across the healthcare system. Prior to this, she was Director of Clinical Operations at Tenet Healthcare, focusing on streamlining workforce strategies and improving operational efficiency. She also held the role of Director of Clinical Operations at HealthTrust Workforce Solutions, where she specialized in staffing optimization for large healthcare networks. With leadership experience across multiple major healthcare organizations, she is dedicated to driving efficiency, improving patient care and addressing workforce challenges in the ever-evolving healthcare landscape.



Cody D. Legler, DNP, APRN, NP-BC, RN-BC, NEA-BC, CNL

Senior Vice President & System Chief Nursing Officer

Cody is the Senior Vice President and System Chief Nursing Officer at Maimonides Health, where he oversees strategic, operational and clinical nursing functions across the system. Prior to this role, he served as Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, leading initiatives that earned the ANCC Pathway to Excellence designation and Baby-Friendly status. Dr. Legler is also an adjunct faculty member at The George Washington University and Marymount University, teaching courses in nursing leadership and health policy. He earned his Doctor of Nursing Practice from The George Washington University in 2014.



Adam Brown, MD, MBA

Chief Medical Officer and Founder & Principal

Adam is a board-certified emergency physician and accomplished healthcare executive. He is the founder and principal of ABIG Health, a strategic advisory firm specializing in healthcare communications and strategy. Previously, Dr. Brown served as President of Emergency Medicine and Chief Impact Officer at Envision Healthcare, where he led the organization's COVID-19 response and clinical communication strategies. In addition to his executive roles, he is a Professor of Practice at the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School, teaching healthcare operations and strategy to MBA students.



Emily Sego, DNP, RN, CPHQ, NEA-BC

Clinical Healthcare Executive

Emily is a seasoned nursing leader with extensive experience in healthcare administration, operations, education and workforce management. She currently serves as the Clinical Healthcare Executive at Nihon Kohden America, where she oversees a team of clinical consultants who work with healthcare organizations across the U.S. to improve nursing efficiencies and patient outcomes using advanced patient monitoring technologies. Prior to this role, she was Vice President and Chief Nurse Executive of Ambulatory Care at Community Health Network where she led nursing practice for over 200 sites of care. Emily's expertise lies in developing innovative staffing solutions and fostering a culture of excellence in clinical settings.



The Workforce Crisis

and the Need for Change

The healthcare workforce is at a breaking point. Persistent staffing shortages, rising labor costs and increasing burnout among healthcare professionals are threatening the stability of care delivery and patient access across hospitals and health systems. By 2028, the United States is projected to face a deficit of more than 100,000 healthcare workers, with the gap particularly pronounced in nursing and frontline care roles. Traditional staffing models—dependent on stopgap contract labor and reactive hiring strategies—are proving unsustainable. The urgent need for innovation is clear.

Technology- and data-driven strategic partnerships have emerged as critical solutions. Advanced workforce analytics, AI-enhanced scheduling and automation can improve staffing efficiency, while expert partnerships help healthcare organizations transition away from reactive workforce management to sustainable, data-informed strategies. Many hospitals and health systems now partner with external experts to implement technology-driven staffing solutions, build internal workforce programs and adopt innovative strategies that enhance stability and control costs.

Partnerships with external experts provide healthcare leaders with valuable insights and strategic guidance, helping them adopt and integrate advanced workforce technology, enhance data transparency and develop self-sufficient workforce strategies. By leveraging these experts' market intelligence and innovative solutions, organizations can build resilience in the face of crises, enhance sustainability in staffing and improve patient care—all while positioning themselves for success in the evolving healthcare financial landscape.

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“Traditional ways of thinking about staffing can sometimes hold healthcare leaders back from embracing innovation. External workforce experts play a crucial role in pushing organizations to explore new strategies, especially as many experienced CNOs retire and a new generation of leaders steps in without the same depth of experience. External experts can provide valuable insights, helping leaders navigate emerging workforce trends and offering fresh perspectives that might otherwise be difficult to visualize and implement.”

– **Emily Sego,**
DNP, RN, CPHQ, NEA-BC



The Role of Technology:

Integrating Workforce Innovation with Legacy Systems

Technology is transforming healthcare workforce management, offering innovative solutions to longstanding staffing challenges. AI, automation and predictive analytics are no longer futuristic concepts but essential tools that optimize scheduling, improve workforce allocation and reduce administrative burdens.

However, one of the biggest challenges lies in integrating these solutions with existing legacy systems, such as scheduling systems (ShiftWizard, UKG/Kronos, Schedule360); electronic medical records (EMRs), including Epic, Cerner and Meditech; human resource information systems (HRIS), such as Workday, Oracle, SAP SuccessFactors and BambooHR; and payroll platforms, like ADP, Paycom and Paylocity. Many healthcare organizations hesitate to adopt new technologies due to concerns about disrupting established workflows and data systems.



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“Technology is a critical driver of workforce efficiency in healthcare. AI and data analytics can improve staffing predictions, ensuring the right resources are in place when and where they’re needed, while automation helps reduce administrative burdens on clinical staff. Innovations like virtual care, self-scheduling and digital monitoring tools create more flexible workforce models that not only support healthcare professionals but also enhance patient access to timely, high-quality care.”

**– Cody D. Legler,
DNP, APRN, NP-BC, RN-BC,
NEA-BC, CNL**

Seamless compatibility through close collaboration and customization is critical. Too often, software operates in silos, leading to low adoption and failure due to lack of integration with existing systems. To address this, modern workforce platforms must integrate with HRIS and EMR systems to enhance analytics and automation without requiring costly infrastructure overhauls. By harnessing real-time workforce data, organizations can improve staffing decisions, streamline operations and control costs. One of the most significant barriers to success is fragmented technology—when workforce software remains isolated from core systems, adoption rates decline, limiting its overall effectiveness.

Without full integration, workforce management programs can struggle to scale, making it difficult for healthcare organizations to achieve meaningful operational improvements. For workforce management technology to be truly effective, it must be customized to address the specific challenges of a healthcare unit or department. A staffing management system or vendor management system must integrate seamlessly with current scheduling systems and HRIS platforms to ensure adoption and efficiency. At the same time, virtual care, self-scheduling platforms and digital monitoring tools can create more flexible workforce models that accommodate the evolving needs of modern healthcare professionals while expanding patient access to care.

Additionally, AI-powered workforce management systems continuously evolve and improve. AI-driven analytics enhance staffing predictions, while automated solutions reduce administrative burdens. As healthcare organizations expand their outsourced intelligent technology partnerships, AI learns from workforce data, delivering increasingly precise and effective solutions. These systems anticipate staffing shortages, suggest optimal resource allocation and even identify burnout risks among employees. By leveraging AI's ability to analyze workforce trends and predict shortages, hospitals can shift from reactive crisis management to proactive workforce planning.

Ultimately, a properly integrated workforce technology solution ensures that staffing platforms are not only functional but also scalable, adaptable and aligned with the organization's long-term workforce strategy.

By implementing advanced healthcare workforce technology platforms and software, hospitals and health systems can gain greater control over workforce data and cost management, enabling a shift from reactive staffing processes to a data-driven, long-term strategy that enhances staffing stability and financial sustainability.



The Evolution of Workforce Partnerships:

From Stopgaps to Strategic Data-Driven Solutions

Historically, healthcare organizations viewed contingent staffing as a reactive measure, primarily focused on filling immediate staffing gaps rather than addressing long-term workforce challenges. Contracting with external agencies was often seen as a stopgap solution, offering temporary relief during surges in patient volume or employee absences, while contributing little to systemic improvements. However, the healthcare industry's evolving needs and persistent workforce shortages have shifted this perspective. Today, external workforce partners are recognized as strategic allies who not only provide staffing support but also contribute to market intelligence, efficiency enhancements, and long-term stabilization of healthcare systems.

Implementing workforce solutions through technology platforms and software may be one particular area where hospitals and health systems lack the necessary in-house expertise. The knowledge and skills required to customize workforce platforms to meet the unique operational challenges of a healthcare provider often reside outside the organization, among external workforce experts. Specialists can help healthcare organizations develop and implement customized technology solutions that integrate seamlessly with existing systems instead of clashing with legacy systems, a problem that occurs far too often in the healthcare industry.

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A successful workforce strategy starts with clearly defining the challenges before attempting to solve them. Healthcare workforce issues—whether burnout, staffing shortages, or operational inefficiencies—are complex and require targeted, strategic interventions. The right workforce management partner can help healthcare organizations identify their specific challenges and develop customized strategies that address multiple issues simultaneously, ensuring sustainable, long-term improvements. Embedding clear metrics within contracts can also drive accountability and measurable success.”

– **Adam Brown,**
MD, MBA

Another valuable aspect of workforce partnerships is the ability to gain real-time business insights and market intelligence. Healthcare leaders who take a data-driven approach to workforce management recognize that external partners can provide key market analytics and trends that inform strategic decision-making. By leveraging workforce partners who continuously analyze staffing trends, compensation fluctuations, and labor market dynamics, healthcare organizations can make more informed workforce decisions that align with both short-term operational needs and long-term sustainability goals.

In addition to providing critical data insights, workforce partners also play a crucial role in helping healthcare organizations develop and adopt innovative workforce strategies. Many healthcare leaders, particularly those in more traditional institutions, may be hesitant to explore new staffing models or operational frameworks. However, experienced workforce consultants can push organizations to develop more creative and forward-thinking approaches to workforce planning—such as through the adoption of flexible scheduling models, the integration of predictive analytics into staffing decisions or the implementation of new retention and engagement strategies.

Another key advantage of strategic workforce partnerships is the ability to co-create tailored solutions that address the specific workforce challenges of an organization. Instead of offering one-size-fits-all staffing solutions, effective workforce partners collaborate with healthcare leaders to assess workforce gaps, identify underlying issues, and design customized strategies to enhance workforce stability and efficiency. By engaging in a consultative process, workforce partners can work alongside healthcare organizations to evaluate challenges and develop actionable, measurable solutions that align with institutional goals.

Beyond individual organizational benefits, workforce partnerships can also foster a broader support system that evaluates workforce challenges at a regional or industry-wide level. By working collaboratively with industry experts, healthcare organizations can gain access to shared insights, best practices and benchmarking data that help shape workforce strategies on a larger scale. This collective approach to workforce management can improve overall labor market stability, enhance transparency in staffing practices and create opportunities for organizations to work together in addressing systemic workforce shortages.



Lessons from COVID-19:

Crisis Response vs. Sustainable Workforce Strategies

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly exposed the vulnerabilities inherent in traditional healthcare staffing models. Healthcare systems that lacked internal workforce solutions, such as float pools or reliable staffing pipelines, faced significant challenges in meeting the sudden surge in patient volumes. Conversely, organizations with pre-existing relationships and infrastructure for rapid workforce deployment were better positioned to navigate the crisis effectively. The pandemic also highlighted the pitfalls of a fragmented approach to workforce management, as hospitals were forced to engage in bidding wars for travel nurses, significantly driving up labor costs to unsustainable levels.

Rather than competing for limited staff, a more sustainable approach—facilitated strategic workforce partnerships—could have ensured a more stable and equitable distribution of workforce resources. This experience underscores the urgent need for a more unified, transparent and data-driven approach to workforce allocation.

One of the key takeaways from the pandemic was the importance of workforce flexibility. Cross-training among staff allowed hospitals to shift personnel between departments as demand fluctuated. Cross-credentialing clinicians to practice at multiple facilities provided a safety net,

allowing them to continue working wherever they were needed even if patient volumes at their primary hospital fluctuated. While administrative and logistic hurdles pose challenges, the long-term benefits far outweighed the costs. This level of flexibility not only improves hospital efficiency but also can enhance job satisfaction for clinicians.

Close collaboration between healthcare organizations and external workforce experts sometimes proved invaluable during the COVID-19 crisis. Engagement managers who worked closely with hospitals and clinicians helped facilitate staffing adjustments as unforeseen changes in patient demand and acuity often changed rapidly. Partnerships with external experts strengthened trust and collaboration, providing clinicians with greater stability while helping healthcare organizations better manage staffing demands, reduce turnover and maintain a reliable, adaptable workforce to meet evolving patient needs.

The skyrocketing costs of contingent staffing during the pandemic demonstrated the urgent need for long-term workforce strategies that reduce dependence on expensive temporary labor. Hospitals found themselves in direct competition, often engaging in cutthroat hiring battles for essential staff, further exacerbating financial strain and workforce instability.

Moving forward, hospitals must prioritize collaboration over competition by developing internal workforce solutions such as hospital-based float pools and nursing pipeline programs. Examining opportunities for regional workforce cooperation frameworks could also help prevent a repeat of the staffing crises seen during the pandemic.

To prevent future crises, healthcare organizations must invest in proactive workforce infrastructure before the next

emergency arises. Internal solutions must be put in place to ensure that hospitals have the agility to respond to sudden fluctuations in demand. External workforce experts can play a critical role in helping healthcare organizations build these solutions in advance, leveraging their expertise to develop sustainable staffing strategies that enhance resilience. By learning from the lessons of COVID-19 and collaborating with strategic workforce partners, hospitals can create a more stable, cost-effective and adaptable workforce model that better prepares them for future challenges.





Building Self-Sufficiency:

The Shift Toward Internal Staffing Models

The escalating costs and challenges associated with external staffing agencies have prompted healthcare organizations to develop self-sufficient workforce strategies. By establishing float pools, structured workforce pipelines and other customized internal strategies, institutions can reduce dependence on external agencies, leading to improved financial stability and enhanced cultural cohesion. This shift allows hospitals to maintain greater control over staffing resources, ensuring alignment with institutional goals while fostering a more stable and engaged workforce.

Some organizations have started creating their own staffing agencies, working with nursing schools to establish early recruitment pipelines. During the pandemic, some organizations recognized that competing for external staff was unsustainable. Instead, they built their own workforce pipelines, starting to hire nursing seniors and transitioning them into full-time roles. This approach provided greater consistency, cultural integration and long-term cost savings. A proactive internal staffing strategy ensures that hospitals maintain control over labor costs while securing a steady stream of qualified staff.

A self-sufficient workforce strategy offers multiple benefits, beyond simply reducing reliance on external staffing suppliers. One of the most immediate advantages is cost reduction. Organizations that have

implemented internal staffing programs have observed a significant reduction in operational expenditures. Hospitals have been able to retain skilled clinicians at rates that are competitive and sustainable within budget constraints, while decreasing use of external staffing firms.

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Having an internal staffing program, such as a float pool or workforce pipeline, is no longer optional—it’s absolutely essential for every healthcare system. The COVID-19 crisis made it clear that without a strong internal workforce infrastructure, hospitals are left vulnerable, struggling to secure enough nurses and forced to pay unsustainable rates for contingent staff. While external staffing partners can still play a role, every health system must establish its own internal solutions to ensure stability, cost control and resilience against future crises.”

– **Carmelita Riley,**
Esq. RN, MHA, FACHE

Self-sufficiency strategies in workforce management have also led to improved staff satisfaction. Healthcare professionals benefit from greater stability, scheduling predictability and even opportunities to work across multiple locations within a system, allowing them to become more familiar with institutional leadership and culture. This familiarity fosters stronger relationships among clinicians and administrators, making recruitment and retention efforts more effective. Potential recruits can better understand what it means to work within a system, reducing uncertainty and improving job satisfaction.

Beyond cost control and workforce stability, hospital administrators gain essential control over staffing resources by adopting self-sufficient workforce models. Staffing remains the single largest cost center for healthcare organizations, making it imperative that leadership retains direct oversight of staffing allocations and workforce planning.

With internal staffing solutions, administrators can ensure that clinicians meet performance metrics, uphold quality care standards and contribute positively to patient outcomes. This level of control also allows organizations to design more strategic workforce planning initiatives, ensuring that staffing levels are optimized for both present and future needs.

A well-structured internal workforce strategy not only reduces costs but also enhances operational efficiency, strengthens recruitment efforts and builds a more resilient healthcare workforce. By transitioning from reactive staffing solutions to proactive workforce planning, hospitals and health systems can create a more predictable and stable workforce environment. In doing so, they can effectively balance financial sustainability, staff satisfaction and high-quality patient care, ensuring long-term success in an evolving healthcare landscape.





A New Era

of Workforce Management

The healthcare industry faces an unprecedented opportunity to redefine workforce management through an outsourced intelligent technology partnership, a strategic collaboration in which a healthcare organization partners with external experts to provide and optimize technology-driven workforce solutions. Such strategic partnerships customize technology solutions to meet organizational needs without disrupting existing systems, while supporting the development of internal workforce solutions that reduce reliance on staffing agencies. Additionally, they help enhance cultural cohesion, drive retention, improve staff satisfaction and control costs, further supporting long-term workforce stability and efficiency.

Experts with deep staffing expertise, comprehensive knowledge of technology platforms that support and enhance clinical workforce management and the ability to develop customized strategies tailored to each organization's unique needs can partner with healthcare organizations to create resilient, cost-effective staffing models that ensure both stability and flexibility.

Successful workforce management partnerships must go beyond simply filling vacancies. Clear and well-defined value propositions in workforce partnerships ensure alignment between healthcare organizations and their external partners.

An outsourced intelligent technology partnership offers a next-generation approach to workforce management that evolves with organizational needs. Unlike traditional managed service providers (MSPs), outsourced intelligent technology partnerships operate on a consultative model, emphasizing co-ownership and customization. Further, contractual accountability ensures transparency and reliability, helping organizations maintain visibility into workforce expenditures and outcomes.



Best practices in workforce partnerships emphasize data-driven decision-making and long-term workforce development. Key benefits of an outsourced intelligent technology partnership include:

- **Stronger Relationships and Transparency:** Dedicated workforce teams align with an organization's culture and goals, ensuring a seamless fit between staffing solutions and institutional needs.
- **Data-Driven Cost Management:** Bill rate analytics and vendor management system (VMS) utilization provide transparency, allowing healthcare organizations to better manage labor costs and reduce inefficiencies.
- **Quality and Retention Improvements:** Clinical leadership training programs strengthen staff satisfaction and improve patient outcomes, leading to a more engaged and skilled workforce.
- **Internal Resource Development:** By building internal capabilities, healthcare organizations can achieve greater workforce stability and reduce long-term reliance on external staffing solutions.
- **Seamless Staff Transition:** Expert workforce strategies and AI-driven insights help convert temporary staff into long-term employees, strengthening workforce continuity and reducing turnover.

A smarter, more agile workforce solution incorporates workforce analytics, automation, and AI-powered decision-making to optimize staffing operations. Platforms that aggregate data and overlay existing HRIS and EMR systems enhance workforce analytics, automation and reporting without disrupting hospital operations. As an outsourced intelligent technology partnership expands, AI-driven technology continues to refine workforce strategies, improving efficiency, cost-effectiveness and overall staffing quality over time.

Key impacts of an outsourced intelligent technology partnership include:

- **Optimized Workforce Productivity:** AI-driven insights help reduce inefficiencies and improve labor allocation, ensuring optimal staffing levels at all times.
- **Financial Transparency and Budget Control:** Advanced data analytics provide clarity in labor spend projections, helping hospitals maintain budget control and avoid cost overruns.
- **Retention and Quality Enhancement:** Training, career coaching, and resource management support staff development, improving retention rates and overall workforce satisfaction.

Healthcare organizations can strengthen their workforce strategies to meet the challenges of staffing shortages, rising labor costs and evolving care demands while proactively preparing for future health crises. Partnering with external experts who bring deep staffing expertise and advanced workforce technologies enables healthcare organizations to develop customized, sustainable solutions that drive operational excellence.

By integrating technology that supports clinical staffing, optimizing internal workforce programs and establishing clear accountability, healthcare leaders can move beyond reactive workforce management and toward a more proactive and resilient strategy and long-term organizational success.

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