Washington's Health Workforce SENTINEL NETWORK

Findings Brief: *Large Hospitals*

Spring 2026

This brief highlights workforce needs reported by Washington's **acute care hospitals (more than 25 beds, "large hospitals")** to the Health Workforce Sentinel Network during **April/May 2026.** These facilities have contributed workforce insights since 2016, across 18 reporting periods. More findings are available at wa.sentinelnetwork.org/findings.

Large Hospitals*

Top occupations with exceptionally long vacancies

Rank	Spring 2021	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Spring 2025	Spring 2026
1	Registered nurse	Registered nurse	Not enough responses to support meaningful findings.**	Physician/Surgeon	Six of the 10 respondents reported no occupations with exceptionally long vacancies.**
2	Nursing assistant Physician/Surgeon	Physician/ Surgeon		Magnetic Resonance Imaging technologist Registered nurse Radiologic technologist or technician	
3	Pharmacy technician	Nurse anesthetist Social worker		Medical assistant Social worker	
4	Medical assistant Med/Clinical laboratory technologist Respiratory therapist Surgical technologist	Multiple occupations at the same frequency.		Multiple occupations at the same frequency.	
5	Med/Clinical laboratory technician				

← Most cited

*Occupations cited by the same number of responses share the same rank number.
**Responses shown are from data collection dates with sufficiently large numbers of responses from large hospitals to support meaningful findings.

Reasons for Exceptionally Long Vacancies and Turnover/Retention Problems

Compared to prior rounds, more respondents reported that exceptionally long vacancies and turnover/retention challenges did not affect their ability to fully staff positions or provide services. This round, 60% indicated that no occupations were affected, suggesting staffing challenges were less widespread than in previous rounds.

Among respondents who identified occupations affected by exceptionally long vacancies, common reasons included a lack of qualified applicants, limited training pipelines, and strong competition for healthcare workers. Examples include:

- *[Multiple occupations] Very rural area, no specific schooling for occupation here, low home inventory.*

Similarly, among respondents who reported retention and turnover challenges, limited local training programs, limited applicant pools, difficult working conditions, persistent staffing shortages remained issues. Examples include:

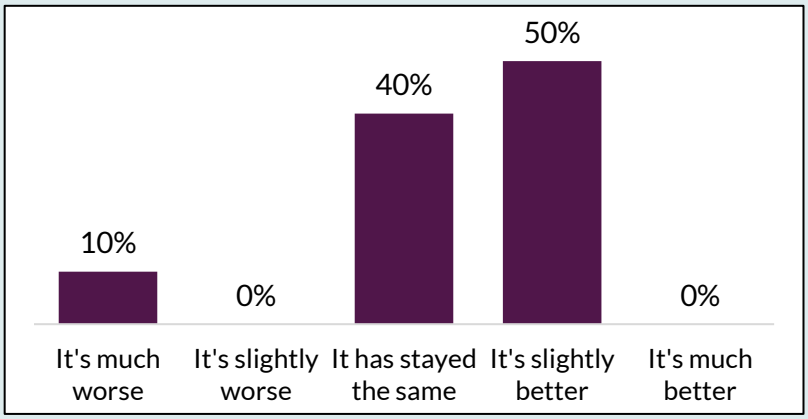
- *[MRI technologist] Hard position to fill for our hospital, had a vacant FTE open for almost 2 years. Just getting it filled, was filled with travelers in the meantime.*

Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples

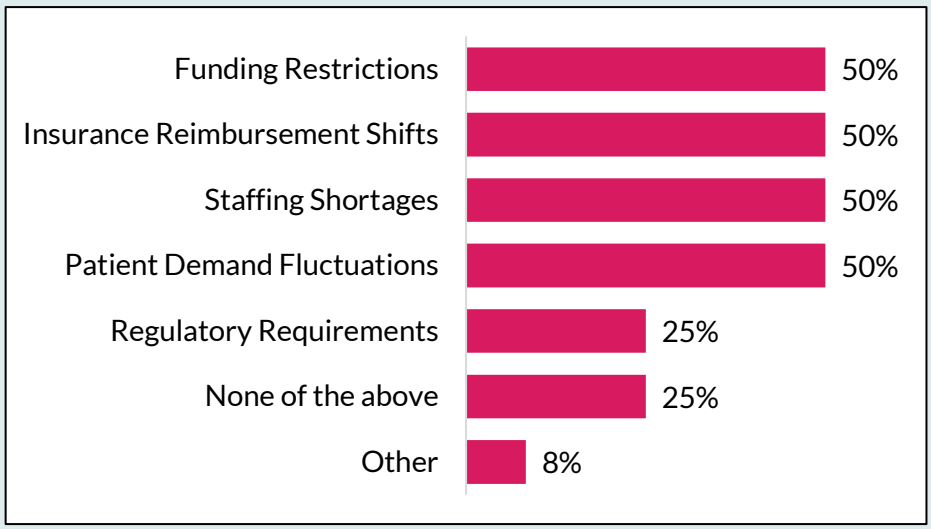
In the past year, how has your organization's ability to staff your facility/facilities changed?

Respondents noted that their ability to staff their organization has stayed the same (40%) or is slightly better than a year ago (50%). Examples of responses:

- [It's slightly better] *Given the economy, people are not leaving at the same rate as there is a lot of competition for jobs. I'm fully hired but the number of FMLA/PFML has increased significantly, leading to challenges with staffing that are completely out of my control.*



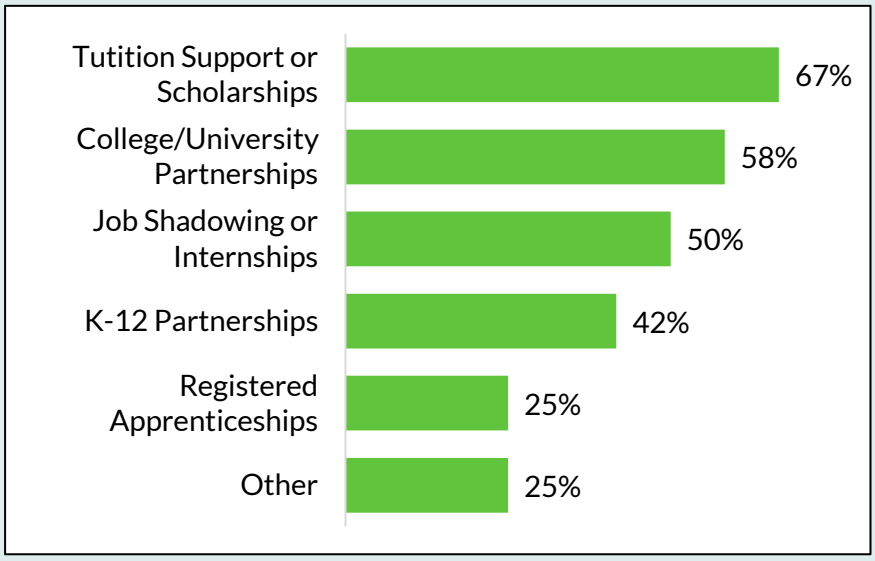
Has your organization recently taken steps or made plans to take steps to navigate uncertainty or prepare for potential changes in any of the following areas? (check all that apply)



- *Facilities have closed. Service delivery has changed. Bed capacity has been limited.*
- *we have been in a sort of "hiring freeze" since October 2025. We are evaluating weekly the needs of the hospital, and positions are being approved as-needed for the hospital to continue operations smoothly. We have worked with departments to see where productivity can be increased, and new processes have been implemented.*

Which of the following workforce outreach, pipeline development, or early-career development strategies does your organization support? (check all that apply)

- *Medical Assistants, Phlebotomists, CNAs have been three of the big positions we have focused on. They have been very helpful for us, providing us with multiple candidates for each MA cohort. Once they have completed their certifications to become a MA-C, they have a contract with us for 1 year after. The phlebotomists come through from the local [community college] and do labs with us.*
- *Have allowed job shadowing by High School students for years.*

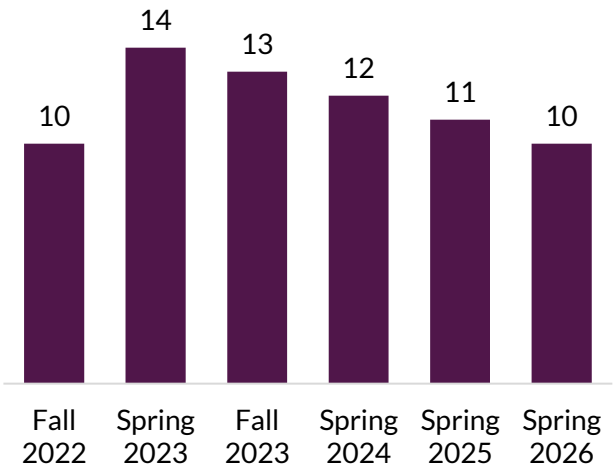


Overarching Workforce Issues: Themes and Examples (continued)

Has your organization adopted, or is it considering adopting, any new or existing technology?
About half of respondents from large hospitals indicated that they are considering or have already adopted new technology, including AI. Examples include:

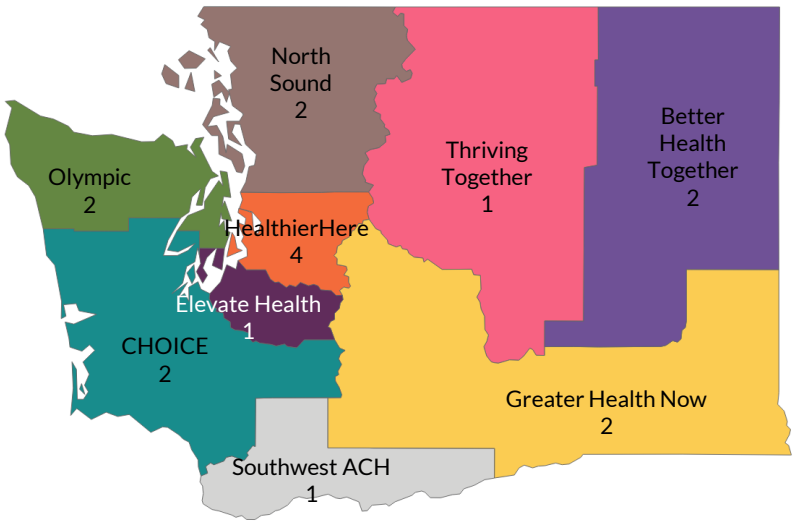
- *Our providers have access to ambient listening software to help with documentation during patient visits.*
- *There are constant changes in our systems, including EPIC, Workday, and UKG.*
- *AI. This is early and hasn't been intertwined with our workflows yet.*

Number of Responses from Large Hospitals in WA by Data Collection Date*



**Findings prior to Fall 2022 not shown due to space constraints.*

Number of Responding Large Hospitals by Accountable Community of Health (ACH), Spring 2026



Note: Each facility may serve clients/patients in more than one county, which is why map totals may exceed total unique responses.

About the Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network

The Sentinel Network links the healthcare sector with policymakers, workforce planners and educators to identify and respond to changing demand for healthcare workers, with a focus is on identifying newly emerging skills and roles required by employers. The Sentinel Network is an initiative of Washington's Health Workforce Council, conducted collaboratively by Washington's Workforce Board and the University of Washington's Center for Health Workforce Studies. Funding to initiate the Sentinel Network came from the Healthier Washington initiative, with ongoing support from the Washington State Legislature.

Why become a Sentinel? *As a Sentinel, you can*:
--Communicate your organization's workforce needs to inform policy and planning responses.
--Have access to current and actionable information about emerging healthcare workforce needs.
--Compare your organization's experience and emerging workforce demand trends with similar employer groups.

To view an interactive summary of findings and to provide information from your organization:
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