

South Bend – Elkhart Region Higher Education-Healthcare Partnership Executive Summary

Within the South Bend - Elkhart region, we are facing a healthcare talent attraction, development, and retention crisis. During the summer of 2022, casual conversations were held among leaders across higher education and healthcare to better understand how the talent crisis has affected our region. The open discussion allowed for awareness of how many organizations and programs are currently affected by the crisis. These discussions sparked the idea for a regional partnership that offers collaboration across different sectors. To determine what a partnership might look like for our region, a Higher Education-Healthcare Partnership Summit was held and interviews with existing partnerships around the United States were conducted. Results are summarized below.

Higher Education - Healthcare Partnership Summit

A Higher Education-Healthcare Partnership Summit was held in September of 2022. The event had approximately 40 participants representing a wide range of sectors including higher education, healthcare, economic development, and K-12 schools. Results of the summit yielded insights on the following five themes:

- ***Components of an effective partnership***
Collaboration, representation across stakeholder groups, ownership, defining success through clear outcomes and measures, communication, trust, and identity were all recognized as components of an effective partnership.
- ***Resources that partners can offer***
Summit participants shared that they could bring to a partnership support for outreach and awareness efforts, particularly when it comes to exposing students to the healthcare field. Participants also shared that they could bring their existing networks to the table, as well as the potential for administrative or structural support.
- ***Challenges a partnership will need to overcome***
Notable challenges to be overcome in establishing a partnership included competition, as well as limited resources such as funding and time. Establishing identity and ownership were also identified as challenges in creating a partnership.
- ***Ideas for attracting and retaining talent***
Summit participants shared that partnership efforts should be directed at connecting with the younger generation, providing exposure to the healthcare field, promoting our region as a destination to live, creating incentives such as loan forgiveness, educational credit for work experience, and scholarships, attracting foreign talent, and community involvement.
- ***Obstacles to talent attraction and retention***
Obstacles to talent attraction and retention included people leaving the region for a variety of reasons such as higher paying jobs, lack of financial resources for some wanting to pursue higher education in the healthcare field, limited staff to train the next generation of healthcare professionals, and a lack of understanding of opportunities we have in our community.

Interviewing Regional Healthcare Partnerships Across the Nation

In addition to the summit, interviews were conducted to learn best practices from existing healthcare partnerships across the nation. These partnerships include [BioMed SA](#), the [Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts](#), the Center of Workforce Innovation - Healthcare Consortium, [East Indiana Area Health Education Center - Simulation Consortium](#) and the [Health Improvement Partnership of Santa Cruz County](#). All organizations were asked questions regarding what makes their organization successful and sustainable:

- ***What was the objective of the formation of the partnership?***
The objectives of interviewed partnerships are to retain and attract talent, provide better care to their communities, and be a connecting resource for all.
- ***What were the initial costs of forming the partnership?***
The initial costs of interviewed partnerships were funded through various grants and city support.
- ***How did you get potential partners to buy into the partnership?***
Interviewed organizations had strong connections within their communities, understood that the problems they were facing can only be solved with collaboration, had a well-respected project champion, and demonstrated that the return on investment would be valuable.
- ***What has kept this partnership sustainable?***
In most cases, what has kept the partnerships sustainable is having a membership model in which partners contribute annually, collaborate to apply for grants, and work on new projects together.
- ***What is the structure of the partnership?***
Partnership structures range from informal to advisory boards and multiple committees. All partnerships interviewed have a representative from an outside organization providing administrative support, most often funded through grants. Partnership boards typically range from 20-32 members, often consisting of c-suite individuals. Partnerships also had on average three committees with specialized focuses.

Next Steps

We will speak directly with representatives from stakeholder organizations to understand the needs and challenges faced by each organization. Interviews with organization representatives will occur in January and February, after which all the research including these responses will be shared and discussed at a second partnership summit targeted for April 2023.

For More Information

This effort is being organized by Susan Elrod, Chancellor of Indiana University South Bend, on behalf of the higher education and health industry leaders in the region. Financial support for this research is being provided by IU South Bend, Elkhart General Hospital, Oaklawn, and Saint Joseph Health System, as well as Indiana's Regional Economic Acceleration and Development (READI) initiative. Research is being carried out by enFocus fellow, Alexia Velazquez, with support from Elizabeth Paice, Chief of Staff at IU South Bend. For further information, contact the IU South Bend Chancellor's Office at chancell@iusb.edu or (574) 520-4220.