

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

REAL JOBS RHODE ISLAND CASE STUDY:

CNA Talent Network Partnership

Prepared for:

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CNA Talent Network Partnership

Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI)

In 2015, The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT) awarded funding to workforce development collaborations throughout the state. Funding was provided through development grants to create sector-based partnerships and create a plan to provide workforce training aimed at sector needs. Implementation funding was then provided for these partnerships to develop training materials and train workers in Rhode Island in targeted industries including healthcare, technology, marine trades, and the arts. Sector partnerships were developed through public private partnerships including that included industry, workforce intermediaries and educational institutions to address the economic needs of the state.

I. Sector Need

The CNA Talent Network Partnership (CNA TNP) developed by the United Nurses and Allied Professionals Rhode Island Hospital (UNAP RIH) Education Fund and the Stepping Up program, sought to address several issues within the healthcare sector. During the RJRI planning grant process, Stepping Up conducted focus groups, surveys, and interviews, with more than 1,600 health care organizations, employers, and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) to learn about training needs in the healthcare sector. Through this effort, the CNA TNP found that the major challenge to growth and success in the health care and long-term care sector was a lack of essential soft skills in newly licensed CNAs. Specifically, organizations noted that many CNAs lacked the appropriate personal and workplace behavior, cultural awareness, diversity, and professionalism necessary to be successful in a wide variety of clinical settings. Industry professionals saw this skills-gap as leading to both lower quality patient care and a higher turnover rate among CNAs, which hurts employee retention and employers' ability to expand and be financially stable.

The following considerations were also identified as related challenges:

- CNAs will be the #1 growing occupation out of the 50 fastest growing occupations in Rhode Island until the year 2022.¹
- CNAs remain the critical link in the continuum of care and work in all clinical settings, including acute care, long-term care, home care, and hospice care.
- Essential skills are particularly critical to the CNA position because of the highly interpersonal nature of the profession.
- Graduates of Stepping Up's CNA training program have an average starting wage of \$12.14 per hour and a 77% job placement rate.
- Employers have identified these skills as lacking in many of the CNAs they hire:

¹ *Top 50 Occupations with Largest Growth: 2012-2022*. Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. Web. 1 Oct. 2015

- Managing stress and multiple priorities.
- Coming to work on time and when scheduled.
- Actively listening, following directions and accepting feedback.
- Resolving conflict and working as part of a team.
- Problem-solving and decision-making.
- Dealing with patients that have dementia, substance abuse, and mental health issues.
- Understanding the job requirements, including the need to work weekends and second shifts.

The CNA TNP identified that changing the current approach and strategies for CNA recruitment and training could address these issues. Therefore, the mission of the CNA TNP was to design a training program that would develop well-trained, qualified CNAs to meet the needs of the growing healthcare sector and would reduce employee turnover.

II. Grant History

Prior to receiving RJRI funding, Stepping Up and the UNAP RIH Education Fund represented the healthcare sector in the State of RI as the industry partner for the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB). Stepping Up received multiple healthcare training grants in the past, such as those from the GWB and a Living Rite grant, in which they provided job readiness training for people seeking a pathway to employment in healthcare through their Healthcare Career Pathways Program or Registered Nurses (RNs) who were under- or unemployed, or wanted advanced training.

Stepping Up found out about the RJRI funding opportunity during a GWB meeting and at a press conference that it attended related to its GWB affiliation. Stepping up successfully applied for and received a RJRI planning grant, and utilized many existing relationships to develop the employer partnership list for the RJRI training program. These relationships formed from working together on past grants and initiatives and through RJRI planning grant activities. As part of planning grant activities, RJRI staff encouraged Stepping Up to work with two other RJRI healthcare sector partners, the Healthy Jobs RI partnership, and the Healthcare Training Collaborative partnership, which already provided a training program for CNAs. These partnerships worked to identify a training plan that worked for all three partnerships but were unsuccessful due to differing needs and priorities. Stepping Up decided to work with CCRI as an education partner because CCRI already had a CNA training. CCRI was willing to modify its existing training to meet the needs of the RJRI grant.

III. Goals and Objectives

The CNA TNP was developed to address the insufficient capacity in the region to meet current employment needs. Emphasis was placed on providing soft skill trainings to supplement the already existing CNA certification training offered by Stepping Up. The target population

for this training program was individuals who were under- or unemployed and/or those with low income who are considered low-skilled job seekers. The CNA TNP set out to:

- Provide training, education, career coaching, and support services for low skill under- or unemployed job seekers and workers so they may work as CNAs for healthcare and long-term care organizations.

As part of this, the CNA TNP worked to:

- Bolster the process for CNA recruitment to ensure that candidates have a realistic idea of what a CNA encounters on the job before entering certification training.
 - This involved employers participating in candidate interviews to determine their suitability for the work and allowing prospective CNA candidates to tour their facilities.
- Provide career advising, case management, and wraparound services for CNA candidates, prior to completing their training, to address barriers to steady employment before they were hired.
 - This was designed to lower recruitment costs and improve retention for the employer, while improving the individual's ability to maintain employment.
- Utilize employer-identified skills gaps to create a supplemental curriculum for use during CNA training, as a complement to clinical instruction.
 - This curriculum was designed to ready the trainees to enter the workforce professionally prepared.
- Provide at least 60 hours of clinical training for CNAs.
 - This was included to ensure that CNAs gained a broader understanding of the duties and expectations of the job and had substantial practice with their clinical skills.
- Create a CNA apprenticeship program, which would be developed in year one and implemented in year two.
 - The apprenticeship would provide CNAs with an opportunity for continued personal and professional growth. New health care apprenticeship models include certifications in geriatric care, restorative care, advanced care, dialysis technician, behavioral health, and dementia care. An apprenticeship program would provide a career pathway for CNAs that would provide upward mobility with increased wages as an incentive to continue with their employer.
- Create a CNA association, which would be developed in year one and implemented in year two.
 - This association would help to standardize essential skills instruction for CNAs, and provide professional connections, mentoring opportunities, workshops, recognition, message boards, and opportunities to share concerns and expertise.

Specifically, the CNA TNP sought to meet the following objective:

- Provide 20 individuals with training designed to lead to employment in the healthcare industry.

IV. Partnerships

The partnership brought together a diverse set of stakeholders including education providers; acute care, long-term care and home care employers; Workforce Investment Boards; community based organizations; unions and job seekers. The chart below details the partners and their specific responsibilities.

Table 1: Partnership Members and Responsibilities

<p>Stepping Up</p>	<p>Lead Applicant: Responsible for providing case management support for program participants in need of wraparound services; providing career assessments and working with trainees to develop their individualized career pathways; providing support during the clinical portion of the training, during which the CNA trainees first practiced their clinical skills at a healthcare facility; provide job retention counseling and addressing barriers that arose during the newly-hired CNA’s probationary employment period; providing essential skills component of this training.</p>
<p>Community College of Rhode Island</p>	<p>Responsible for providing use of their facilities, clinical instruction, and reporting assistance; assisting with increasing the number and engagement of employer partners; identifying students requiring additional supports; providing recruitment support and cross-referrals; providing TABE test and Medical Questionnaire component; hosting industry-related information sessions for students and/or inviting Stepping Up to career fairs and related functions; providing assistance with sending out skills gap surveys as needed to employer partners; promoting program in the community as well as other participation in/ awareness of workforce development programs.</p>
<p>The Genesis Center, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, Connecting for Children and Families, West Bay Community Action Program, Family Resources, the WARM Center, Workforce Solutions</p>	<p>Responsible for recruiting potential candidates from Rhode Island’s underserved communities for CNA training; providing access to wraparound services when possible that complemented the case management by Stepping Up staff.</p>
<p>Coventry Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Elmwood Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Home Care Assistance, Pine Grove Health Center, Westview Nursing and Rehabilitation Center</p>	<p>Responsible for providing employment opportunities for graduates of the training program; participating in recruitment, candidate selection, training, and post-training activities which included clinical rotations, mock interviews, employment opportunities, and utilizing career advising services; providing feedback on the technical and essential skills portions of the training modules; hosting tours and information sessions of the facilities.</p>

V. Implementation Activities/ Processes

Goal # 1: Provide training, education, career coaching and support services for low skill under- or unemployed job seekers and workers so they may work as CNAs for healthcare and long-term care organizations.

To address its goal, the CNA TNP developed a comprehensive implementation plan that met the needs of employers while also maintaining the integrity of the CCRI CNA program. Employers were enthusiastic about the training idea because it reflected employer demand.

Recruitment and Pre-Screening

The following recruitment and pre-screening activities were used to identify participants for the training program:

- Applicants were referred to the program through employers, pre-CNA programs, community-based organizations, GED programs, and youth centers.
- Community-based organization partners assisted with recruiting candidates from communities with high unemployment rates.
- The CNA TNP organized pre-employment facility tours and interviews with employers, career advisors and instructors to determine job suitability and ensure that candidates were knowledgeable about the role of the CNA before committing to training.
- Each applicant completed a pre-test and pre-screening assessments, including a barriers assessment, writing sample, formal application, and TABE testing. For the pre-test, candidates also had to score at least an 8th grade level on a reading test and pass a medical questionnaire; this was required to meet CCRI's Continuing Education standards.
- Applicants had to supply a current immunization record, high school credential, and a clean state background check.
- Stepping Up worked with its network of community-based organizations to identify child care and transportation resources (such as bus passes) and other needed supports (such as clothing and other basic necessities) for the trainees.

Training Program

CNA Training Module

At CCRI, trainees received Department of Health-approved training on clinical skills provided by CCRI instructors. This training involved 92 hours of classroom/laboratory learning and 32 hours in a nursing facility, for a total of 124 hours. In this module, CCRI tracked CNA classroom training and clinical hours, and administered the licensing test at the end. Trainees also had to pass examinations and demonstrate an ability to perform manual skills throughout the training. Trainees completed at least 100 hours of training, including no fewer than 20 hours of clinical training, as required by the Department of Health. Stepping Up provided support to trainees during the clinical portion of the training. Tuition for the program was \$855, including

a textbook, a workbook, a stethoscope, and a blood pressure cuff for each student, with related fees of \$224 per student, including a pre-test fee, CPR class, CPR textbook, state licensing fee, state testing fee, and state BCI. As part of the CNA TNP, students received scholarships that covered the tuition and fees to attend the CNA training.

Essential Skills Module

In conjunction with the clinical skills curriculum, a work skills instructor from Stepping Up provided 28 hours of essential skills training that took place for half of the day on Fridays. As part of the Essential Skills Module, trainees completed formal assessments, such as pre and post testing on essential skills, and informal assessments, such as in-class question and answer sessions. Trainees also received an industry-recognized certification called “Through the Customer’s Eyes,” which is offered through the National Seminars Training. The trainees were expected to attend all classes related to essential skills, and to participate in all in-class activities.

Career Advising and Case Management Module

Stepping Up also provided 21 hours of career advising and case management support for trainees to help participants address barriers in their lives that impeded completion of the training program. As part of this module, a career advisor provided career assessments, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment (a personality assessment that helps people gain insights about themselves and how they interact with others to improve their communication, learning and work style) and the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (a measure of an individual’s degree of belief that they can successfully complete tasks necessary to making significant career decisions). The career advisors also worked with trainees to develop individualized career pathways action plans. The trainees were expected to attend at least 80% of all sessions in the Career Advising and Case Management module, and to actively participate in class activities.

Post-Clinical Hours Work Experience and Employee Retention Module

Stepping Up staff met with employers and hiring managers to coordinate appropriate clinical and employment placements for participants based on employers’ preferences and the long-term career goals of trainees. At this point, the CNAs had to pass the skills test as part of the licensing process so that they could receive a temporary CNA license while they prepared to take the licensing test. Employers agreed to hire the newly trained CNA’s and provide a 30-hour internship experience for those with a temporary license (the probationary employment period). Following internship placement, the career advisor provided job retention counseling and addressed barriers that arose during the newly-hired CNA’s probationary employment period. The newly-hired CNAs also received interpersonal skills coaching and information about workplace conflict resolution, and completed action plans. The CNA TNP provided a stipend of \$375.00 to participants who successfully completed the 30-hour internship, and internship assessments were completed for each individual. Finally, Stepping Up provided job coaching for

new hires throughout their probationary period based upon feedback from their immediate supervisor.

The following table details the training content for each module provided by the CNA TNP.

Table 2. Overview of Training Modules

Module	Training Content
<p>Certified Nursing Assistant Training Module (124 hours)</p>	<p>Topics covered included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic nursing skills. ● Resident's rights. ● Vital signs. ● Social services. ● Basic rehabilitative services. ● Personal care skills. ● Safety and emergency procedures.
<p>Essential Skills Module (28 hours)</p>	<p>Topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Team building. ● Career exploration. ● Essential skills in the workplace. ● Listening. ● Passive, aggressive, and assertive communication. ● Time management. ● Body language. ● Cultural diversity. ● Ethics. ● Conflict resolution. ● Customer service skills (with credential). ● Job application, online job search, LinkedIn profiles. ● Resume, cover letters, memos, and thank you letters, networking, mock interviews. ● Assessments: MBTI, Career Values, Motivated Skills, National Career Readiness Credential. ● Medical terminology and vocabulary. ● HIPAA—Privacy law, sexual harassment, and stress management.
<p>Career Advising and Case Management Module (21 hours)</p>	<p>Career Advising topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personality and Career Assessments. ● Work Experience Reflection activities. ● Mock Interview Skills. ● Goal Setting. ● Preparing for Work Experience. <p>Case Management topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overcoming employment barriers. ● Strategic action planning. ● Referrals and connections to outside agencies working with students. ● How to avoid burnout as a CNA. ● Role playing.
<p>Post-Clinical Hours Work Experience and Employee Retention Module (Varies by employer- probationary periods range in length)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internship/Work Experience supported by a stipend. ● Interpersonal job coaching. ● Workplace conflict resolution. ● Focus groups.

Support Following Employment

Once a CNA was formally hired, employers shared with Stepping Up the hourly wage and hours worked per week. Stepping Up followed newly-hired CNAs for a period of at least six months, tracking changes in pay rate, hours worked per week, job title, and benefits. Employers also reported any behavioral or competency issues that occurred with the CNA. This allowed for the employer to arrange a meeting between the CNA and their CNA TNP career advisor to provide employment counseling.

Future Program Planning

The CNA TNP also explored other ways to professionalize the CNA workforce. As part of the RJRI grant, the CNA TNP worked to develop an apprenticeship program in conjunction with Rhode Island Hospital that would train individuals who want to advance from a CNA to obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) license. As part of this, the CNA's would be able to add stackable specializations to their credentials by taking part in an acute care boot camp or in learning specialty skills in operating room (OR) procedures, intensive care unit (ICU) procedures, neurology, and/or gerontology.

VI. Achievements

Partnerships

Specific Focus on Partners in Providence

The CNA TNP worked quite extensively with roughly 25% of the employer partners on the original list of 20. The program found it only worked to place individuals in settings in Providence, as this is where most of the trainees lived and transportation was an obstacle for many trainees. The CNA TNP also tended to work with its most responsive partners and built closer relationships with certain partners, such as Rhode Island Hospital.

Recruitment

Successfully Utilizing Recruitment Strategies

The CNA TNP found that receiving referrals for training participants from its network of community-based organizations was very successful. It found that word-of-mouth and posting a flyer on Facebook pages were effective recruitment strategies for meeting its goals. Its goal was to recruit 20 participants and it was able to reach 17 with these strategies.

Trainee Barriers

Overcoming Personal Barriers through Effective Case Management

The CNA TNP encountered many individual triumphs among the CNA trainees throughout the process. All of the trainees who completed the program had to overcome many challenges to complete the training program, including one person who experienced homelessness during the training. Others encountered barriers such as job loss, legal issues,

childcare issues, and transportation issues. The partnership was able to provide bus passes, books, equipment, uniforms, and footwear to participants to help ensure their success. It also helped people get passport photos if need be, which was necessary for those who did not have a driver's licenses but needed photo identification to apply for a CNA licenses. The CNA TNP credited the extensive case management and support services provided by Stepping Up and community-based organization partners for helping trainees be successful.

Effective Essential/Soft Skill Training

Having the essential skills training as part of the clinical skills training was noted as a strength of the CNA TNP training program for overcoming trainee barriers. Some of the trainees were seemingly skeptical of the essential skills component when they signed up for the training, but after they were employed, some noted that it was a valuable that component of the training. For example, at one of the post-employment evaluations, former trainees discussed how helpful that component of the training ended up being for their career.

Training

Supportive Culture for Trainees

Stepping Up encouraged the formation of study groups and created a culture whereby trainees helped out one another and encouraged each other throughout the program. Trainees studied together and communicated with the instructor about questions they had before quizzes. The trainees also provided one another with emotional support, which was beneficial for those with children or other jobs.

Internship Training

Having the internship component of the training was discussed as a strength of the grant; it helped provide the vital bridge for the trainees between training program completion and employment. Some trainees pursued employment at the places in which they completed their internship, while others learned that the particular facility was not a good place for them.

Transition from Training to Employment

Including CNA Licensure in Training

The CNA TNP noted that the biggest success in implementing the grant was getting trainees licensed and employed as CNAs. The partnership noted that of the ten people who completed the training, all of them received their CNA license. Furthermore, eight people are currently employed as a CNA and one person is a firefighter. The CNA TNP considered the one person currently employed as a firefighter as one of the success stories because he was an individual that had an issue on his background check from many years ago. CCRI was willing to enroll him in the training, but they could not guarantee who could get a license, as that would be decided by the Department of Health. In the end, and with coaching from Stepping Up, this

individual did successfully obtain his CNA license, went on to become a firefighter, and is currently in an emergency medical technician (EMT) training program.

Other

Though the CNA TNP experienced success with its training program, it was unable to meet the recruitment and training objectives for the program as initially proposed. The table below details the number of participants who took part in the various trainings during 2016:

Table 3: Performance Metrics for All Training Programs

IG-22 CNA Talent Network (Stepping Up)	Start Date of First Cohort	Proposed End Date for All Cohorts	Target Enrollment	Enrolled	Target Completed	Completed
Recruitment, Training, and Employment						
Enhanced C.N.A. Training - (2 cohorts) (Job Seekers)	4/11/16	7/26/16	20	17	20	9
Total Participants placed in training-related employment					20	7
Total Participants retained in training-related employment					20	Ongoing
Other Objectives						
Total participants that earn an industry recognized credential					20	9
Improved retention (decreased turnover) of CNAs as compared to professionals that did not participate in this program					TBD	Ongoing
Employer satisfaction					TBD	Ongoing

VII. Challenges

Partnerships

CCRI Testing Policies Acted as a Roadblock to Trainee Success

One of the major challenges to implementing this grant was working with CCRI due to their extensive testing and attendance requirements, which made it difficult for CNA trainees to be successful. For example, CCRI had numerous policies involving testing. There was a pre-test that cost \$25, and trainees had to pass the test in order to enroll in the class. The test was only offered on specific dates, which was challenging for some potential trainees, so Stepping Up worked to offer additional tests at their site when there were not enough options. Unfortunately however, many individuals did not pass this test, which included a reading test and supplying medical information, and therefore, enrollment numbers were adversely affected.

Beyond the pre-test, once accepted into the program at CCRI students were administered quizzes periodically that they had to pass. If a person did not score at least a 70% on a particular quiz, they were also asked to leave the program. When someone did not pass a quiz and was forced to leave the program, this proved detrimental to the emotional stability of the other participants. The training participants had become a support network for one another, so losing one of the members was distressing. This required additional emotional support to encourage the other trainees to continue with the program. In addition, if a trainee missed two days of the training (up to 8 hours) due to, for example, personal sickness or the illness of a child, there was no mechanism in place to have participants make up the missed days, so some participants were asked to leave the program because of missing training. However, if a program participant was able to graduate from the CCRI program, they became highly sought after in the industry, because the industry recognized the rigor of the CCRI program and knew graduates of that program were highly skilled and qualified.

Lack of Shared Vision Among Partners

Overall, Stepping Up noted that the biggest challenge to this partnership was that the two entities (Stepping Up and CCRI) did not share the same mission and vision for the CNA TNP. Stepping Up felt it wanted to fully support trainees so they could be successful but felt that this did not align with the policies at CCRI. Stepping Up recognized that many of its recruits came from very disadvantaged backgrounds and had to overcome many barriers in order to make it to training each day, such as family-related and transportation barriers. Stepping Up's end goal was to see the participants obtain employment. CCRI wanted to educate individuals in how to be a CNA, but did not share the same goal of seeing these specific individuals succeed in the program and obtain employment, or understand the extent of the needs and barriers of the population interested in this career path. Stepping Up felt that CCRI's policies were too inflexible and not designed to facilitate success among individuals interested in becoming CNAs.

Lack of Industry Input into Training Program

The CNA TNP impaneled an industry group during the planning process for its training programs, but used the panel as a means of receiving employer feedback on its plan to train CNAs rather than as a tool to identify specific challenges and deficits in the industry. As a result, the CNA TNP's training program overlapped with other CNA training programs in the healthcare industry and did not reflect specific industry needs and concerns.

Recruitment

Complicated Recruitment Process

While the various recruitment and pre-screening activities helped to ensure interested, qualified individuals took the CNA training, the many requirements and issues that came up caused Stepping Up to have to communicate back and forth with potential candidates quite often. This ultimately meant that a lot of people got "lost in the shuffle" during the recruitment and pre-screening phase of the training program. For example, as discussed, CCRI required that applicants pass a pre-test before enrolling in the CNA class. Many of the seemingly qualified students missed passing the test by a couple of points. The applicants could re-take the test, but this required them to have to schedule another testing day and pay for the test again. Stepping Up paid for the first test because RJRI would reimburse the costs for those who actually enrolled in the training, but were unable to pay for the second test because it had not included that in the budget. For other applicants, some of them had issues with their medical checks, such as having up-to-date immunizations, which caused them to have to schedule appointments or identify resources. Because of these extra steps required of applicants and sometimes embarrassment from applicants, people would lose interest or drop out of the program.

Inability to Recruit from One-Stops

The CNA TNP communicated its frustration that it could not recruit directly from Rhode Island's One Stop Career Centers System because it felt their ideal training program candidates would have already been screened by the counselors employed at the One Stop Centers.

Training

Difficulty Scheduling Facility Tours

The CNA TNP found that coordinating facility tours for all potential candidates was challenging to schedule.

Desire to Teach Essential Skills First

Through feedback from training participants, the CNA TNP also learned that providing the essential skills training earlier in the training, rather than throughout the training, would be more beneficial for the trainees, as many of the skills learned (such as the importance of being on-time) are skills needed to complete the training.

Lack of Utilization of Case Management Services

The CNA TNP found that many trainees would not utilize the case management services even if the case manager made herself available during training breaks because the trainees were already in the training program and did not think additional support was needed during that time.

Inability to Run All Proposed Programming

The CNA TNP halted its plans to implement a CNA Apprenticeship after its first year. Through conversations with the DLT, the CNA TNP realized that the wages associated with the CNA profession were too low to create a tiered wage structure that apprenticeships rely on. As such, a CNA apprenticeship program would not be able to effectively compensate its participants, and the planned programming was dropped.

Trainee Barriers

Personal Barriers

Some trainees encountered personal issues, such as having sick kids and no childcare options. This caused them to have to miss classes at CCRI. Two of the participants ended up dropping out of the program because they had more than 8 hours of not being in class for these reasons.

Strict Curriculum Structure Prevented Flexibility

Related to this, when the CNA TNP tried to be flexible when trainees encountered barriers, the nature of the curriculum was structured so that it made it quite difficult to help students catch up after missing class. In some cases, the only option was to allow trainees to take the class again once the next cohort started, but this was not ideal for timing purposes.

Transition from Training to Employment

Hiring at Hospitals

The CNA TNP also encountered a barrier related to the involvement of acute care hospitals, who supported the grant, but experienced difficulties learning how to hire RJRI trainees. CNA workers are required to have six months of work experience in healthcare before being hired, which caused challenges in placing participants into employment.

Other

Staff Turnover within the Lead Applicant's Organization

Stepping Up experienced rapid turnover of executive directors during the implementation of the CNA TNP's training programs. This led to a lack of direction and consistency within the organization and its implementation efforts.

Lack of Organizational Direction

Stepping Up was originally run with direct input from the chairman of the Rhode Island Hospital's United Nurses and Allied Professionals (UNAP) board. Once he left the UNAP

board, other board members did not provide the same level of guidance on Stepping Up's organizational direction. As such, the organization, which had vastly expanded its organizational mission in the years prior to this member's departure, suffered from a lack of organizational direction and guidance from outside the organization.

VIII. Sustainability

Depending on how substantial the return on investment is for employer partners, the partnership plans to discuss employer contributions in providing training and explore other funding sources. Further, the CNA TNP believes that individual elements of the essential skills training can be customized to meet individual employer needs and could be provided for a fee to potentially finance this project in future years. In the future, Stepping Up plans to work with a different educational partner, one that ideally shares its vision for the program, and is also going to work more closely with the LifeSpan health system, Rhode Island Hospital, HomeFront Healthcare, and Rhode Island College to develop the CNA apprenticeship program. Stepping Up has received additional funding through Building Futures (part of a United Way grant) and in partnership with CVS Health to implement a pharma-tech training program.

IX. Lessons Learned

The following lessons were learned by the CNA TNP in executing this training program. It may be helpful to:

- Provide its own training program (not in conjunction with an existing program) so that the curriculum could be structured in ways that do not limit participants in successfully completing the program.
- Hire a tutor to help students who experience difficulties in passing quizzes or tests throughout the training program and allow students to retake tests and quizzes after having worked with a tutor.
- Bring in guest speakers who work as CNAs to talk about their experience rather than scheduling facility tours for potential training candidates.
- Provide the essential skills training early on in the training curriculum rather than spreading it out throughout the training program so that trainees can apply the essential skills to the remainder of the training.
- Have the case manager work more closely with the instructor to learn barriers the students may be encountering.
- Have the case manager provide or assist in providing the essential skills component of the training.
- Work with acute care hospitals to better understand their employment requirements for CNA's and help to identify training program mechanisms to address training and employment barriers in these healthcare settings.

X. Best Practices

These best practices were utilized by the CNA TNP:

- Utilize extensive pre-screening activities prior to conducting the training to ensure that participants can be employed in the healthcare sector, such as interviews, assessments, immunization checks, and background checks.
- Recruit from a wide network of community-based organizations that serve low income populations.
- Identify resources to assist trainees with child care, transportation, and other supports prior to trainees taking part in the training program.
- Pay for assessments, tuition, and fees for CNA training program participants.
- Create a culture of support and encouragement across the trainees.
- Provide clinical training in conjunction with essential skills training.
- Provide case management and career advising throughout the training program using a standardized yet flexible plan to the meet needs of participants.
- Identify mechanisms to overcome time barriers between training program completion and employment that, if not addressed, could hinder actual employment in the sector (e.g., internship with a stipend offered while CNAs hold a temporary license).
- Continue to provide participants with job coaching and helping with workplace issues following employment.

XI. Recommendations

Given the number of potential openings in this industry, and the high degree of knowledge and certification needed by these potential workers, investing in this sector remains important. Based on the successes and challenges of the CNA TNP, the following recommendations are suggested to RJRI:

- Work with CCRI to better understand their reasons for standards regarding test mandates and if possible, help them identify plausible adjustments that may better meet the needs of under- or unemployed low-skilled individuals.
- Continue to enable partnerships to be flexible with their training programs to respond to the needs of employers.
- Continue to pay for the assessment, tuition and related fees, and licensing costs required for training participants, as these costs are quite substantial and would limit training enrollment and participation, and for stipends to participants during the internship, as this helps ensure a successful transition between training program and employment.
- Help training partners identify online options for participants who miss a class or are forced to miss class for an extended period due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Help partnerships better understand policies regarding one-stop centers and/or help partnerships identify how they can utilize one-stop centers for recruitment.
- Identify best practices utilized in states that have invested in CNA training programs.
- Invest heavily in helping the healthcare sector identify innovative solutions to address CNA shortages across healthcare and long-term care organizations.

