

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

TOPICS

The Challenges of
Securing Human
Resources for Health

Policies and Systems to
Secure Health Workers

Strategies to Retain
Health Workers

Shaping Workforce
Policies While Avoiding
Micromanagement

This section describes roles for the governing body to help create the conditions within which health workers are more likely to successfully achieve their organization's mission and plans. The term human resources (HR) development is used in this section to mean development of workforce capability and capacity to satisfy current and future health service demands. Under each section there are boxes with practical HR development and management tips for board members.

THE CHALLENGE

As an experienced physician in Peru, you serve as the managing director of a large regional referral hospital that is facing a severe shortage of nurses and laboratory technicians. An influential board member wants you to contract with her training school at very expensive rates to develop your own nurse-training program. What are the issues you must be careful about? And how might you best develop a master HR development plan for all of your health workforce needs?

THE CHALLENGES OF SECURING HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH

Health sector leaders know that health services depend on health workers. Unfortunately, many local and national health systems do not invest in the compensation, infrastructure, or capacity development needed to attract and retain good talent in the health systems of low- and middle-income countries. These weaknesses cause a persistent shortage of essential health workers across the globe.¹

More than 70% of health services costs relate to health workers. Because the effectiveness and productivity of these health workers are central to achieving the mission of their organizations, local governing bodies must become more comfortable with and competent in facing the challenges and designing strategies to support a good supply of health workers at all levels of a country's health system. Key challenges faced in recruiting and retaining health workers are:²

- lack of funding by ministries of health and a resultant overdependence on foreign donors;
- poor working conditions, including lack of supplies, medicines, and new technologies; low pay; lack of housing; and unsafe conditions for women;
- lack of support for career planning, ongoing development of a talent pipeline, and continuing professional development;
- lack of recognition by national and local heads of state about the value of the health sector and health workers as positive contributors to political stability and economic growth;
- weak pre-service and in-service training for the profession of health managers in the health sector.

Improving human resources means more than ensuring that the appropriate numbers and types of health workers are in place. These efforts must be supported by sound policy, especially in the areas of managing, retaining, and funding the health workforce.

Management Sciences for Health (MSH) has been working for over 20 years to support the development and management of smart human resource policies, practices, and infrastructure with local health systems, managers and governing bodies.³

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1. See the analysis reports and other resources of the Global Health Workforce Alliance, Knowledge Centre (Geneva: WHO, 2015). Available at: <http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/en/>
 2. On human resource challenges, see Joint Learning Initiative, *Human Resources for Health: Overcoming the Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2004). Available at: http://www.who.int/hrh/documents/JLi_hrh_report.pdf; this article: Gavin Yamey, "What Are the Barriers to Scaling Up Health Interventions in Low and Middle Income Countries?: A Qualitative Study of Academic Leaders in Implementation Science," *Globalization and Health* 2012; 8. Available at: <http://www.globalizationandhealth.com/content/8/1/11>; and these publications: *Knowledge Strategy of the Global Health Workforce Alliance 2009-2011* (Geneva: WHO, no date). Available at: <http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/publications/alliance/2009KnowledgeStrat.pdf> and those from the CapacityPlus Project website, "HRH Action Framework: Action Field: Leadership" (Chapel Hill, NC: CapacityPlus partners, 2015). Available at: <http://www.capacityproject.org/framework/leadership/>
 3. MSH, Human Resources for Health [website]. Available at: <https://www.msh.org/our-work/health-system/human-resources-for-health>

The importance of health workers cannot be overemphasized in the work of your governing body. The World Health Organization's [Global Health Workforce Alliance](#) offers many resources for your consideration as you develop and monitor your organization's human resources for health (HRH) initiatives.⁴ Supportive policies are also available from USAID's [CapacityPlus Project](#).⁵

POLICIES AND SYSTEMS TO SECURE HEALTH WORKERS

Many reports define the scope and nature of the policies and systems needed to attract, retain, and enhance the capacities of health workers in low-resourced countries. The bold actions, recommendations, and investments that these reports call for now need the understanding and commitment of governing body leaders to support their implementation. Governing bodies need a subgroup on HRH planning and support systems, as outlined in the Global Health Workforce Alliance [HRH Toolkit](#).⁶

Governing bodies must work with their managers to make certain that the following five initiatives and investments are in place for HRH success.

1. **Data:** Review current workforce data and anticipated workforce needs to create an understanding of current and potential gaps.
2. **Strategy:** Invest in an overarching workforce planning model or approach.
3. **Implementation:** Plan and implement an approach to ensure a pipeline of future personnel for the organization, while considering how new technology will change how the workforce functions and delivers services.
4. **Evaluation:** Establish a process for monitoring the effectiveness of the workforce planning and development model or strategy. It is important to regularly measure the results of recruitment, orientation, and retention programs.
5. **Cross-cutting foundational pillar:** Invest in HR leadership and governance policies, systems, and practices that promote equity, efficiency, and commitment.

4. See, for example, Global Health Workforce Alliance, *Health Workforce 2030: A Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health* (Geneva: WHO, no date). Available at: http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/resources/strategy_brochure9-20-14.pdf?ua=1

5. CapacityPlus Project, Knowledge Library: Selected Health Workforce Tools from CapacityPlus (Washington, DC: Intra-Health International, 2015). Available at: <http://www.capacityplus.org/knowledge-library/all>

6. Global Health Workforce Alliance, *The Human Resource for Health Toolkit* (Geneva: WHO, 2015). Available at: <http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/toolkit/hrhtoolkitpurposepages/en/>

STRATEGIES TO RETAIN HEALTH WORKERS

Once it is clear that recruited health workers, who have begun fulfilling their responsibilities, are an asset to the organization, it is important to retain them. Governing bodies can work with the managers and representatives of health workers to design, fund, and monitor the implementation of these five key actions for retaining health workers:

1. They should invest in a performance management system that defines clear job expectations, includes a performance appraisal process, and contains tools that help health workers to accomplish desired goals and results.
2. They should develop strategies to improve morale, job satisfaction, and supervision of staff, and to increase productivity.
3. They should implement a package of financial and non-financial incentives and retention strategies tailored to particular cadres and relevant to specific contexts, to maximize their effectiveness.
4. They should create programs to enhance personal growth, mentoring, career development, and organizational stability.
5. They should plan for continuous improvements in the well-being and occupational safety of health workers.

How is your organization already carrying out some of these important strategies? How could your organization use these strategies to accomplish better results? What additional actions should you encourage your managers to take?

SHAPING WORKFORCE POLICIES WHILE AVOIDING MICROMANAGEMENT

Governing boards often micromanage organizations or staff because they are confused about their roles, or they lack policies to guide their workforce-related actions. Governing body leaders can contribute more productively to shape workforce planning and management policies by working collaboratively with the senior management of the organization and asking these fundamental questions:

- Are we attracting the kind of people we are willing to entrust this organization to?
- Are we developing them so that they can continuously improve their performance?
- Are we retaining them, inspiring them, recognizing them?
- Are we making human resource decisions that correspond to our vision for tomorrow, or we are settling for the convenience of today?

Discuss these actions with your governing body leaders to adapt them to your unique realities.