



CHAPTER SUMMARY

The ReNEW Fund: Building and Sustaining a Talent Pipeline for Nurses

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To address the national nursing shortage, the Reinvesting in Nursing Education and Workforce (ReNEW) Fund aims to help thousands of historically underserved students earn Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees and connect them to employer partners who agree to repay their outcomes-based loans as a new-hire benefit and retention incentive.

Challenges

The U.S. is in the midst of a nursing shortage: Not enough nurses are trained each year to meet demand. In addition, many prospective nurses from low- and moderate-income backgrounds struggle to afford nursing education. The result is that many health care employers — particularly those in more rural or low-income areas — must turn to costly contract labor to meet the needs of their patients.

For health care employers like Central Health, ReNEW offers a smarter investment: The cost of supporting a full-time nurse through the Fund is far lower over time than relying on expensive travel nurses or the replacement cost of filling nurse vacancies. For students, it removes financial barriers to a life-changing career. And for funders, it creates a durable impact — because every repayment from graduates or employers is reinvested to support future learners.

Opportunities

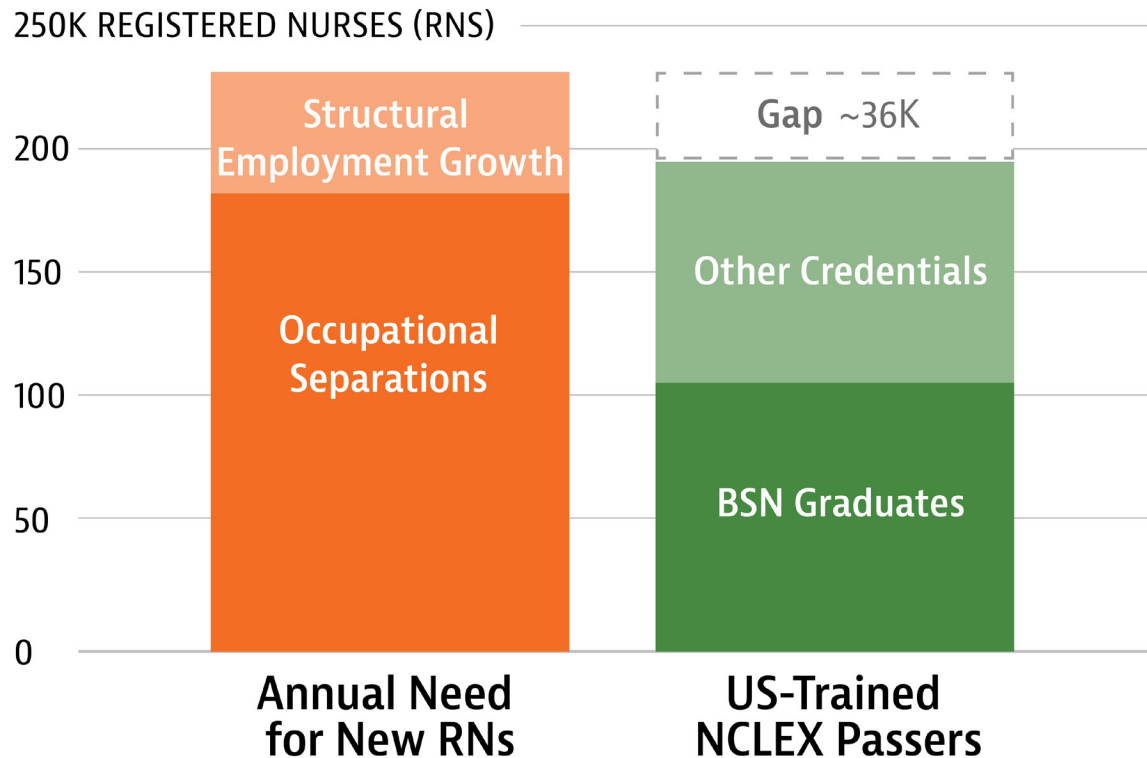
The ReNEW Fund — launched by Western Governors University (WGU) and Social Finance in 2024, with Central Health joining as an employer partner in 2025 — uses an innovative financing model to build and sustain a talent pipeline of nurses.

Workforce Realigned, Vol. II

This is a summary of the full chapter included in Workforce Realigned, Volume II available at workforcerealigned.org/chapters/the-renew-fund-building-and-sustaining-a-talent-pipeline-for-nurses/.



ANNUAL REGISTERED NURSE LABOR MARKET PROJECTIONS (2023-2025)



The ReNEW Fund provides zero-interest, outcomes-based loans to nurses from disadvantaged backgrounds to help cover their tuition and critical living expenses for the last two years of WGU's nursing program. The ReNEW Fund also connects students with health care employer partners like Central Health.

Upon graduation, if the student is hired and agrees to work for a participating employer partner for at least three years, the employer agrees to pay into the ReNEW Fund at key milestones — and that nurse is relieved of any loan repayment obligation. Nurses who do not work for a partner employer, or who leave a job with a participating employer before the end of their three-year commitment, are responsible for repaying the remaining principal balance — but no repayment is required if they earn less than \$60,000 annually.

All repayments from employers and/or nursing school graduates are reinvested in the ReNEW Fund, where they will be used to finance education for additional students in the future.

Key Takeaways

- Health care employers' costs of paying into the ReNEW Fund for a nurse they hire and retain are far lower over time than the costs of recruitment and staffing contract fees to fill nurse vacancies.
- The cycle of repayment and reinvestment makes the ReNEW Fund financially sustainable: It is designed to serve today's nursing workforce needs and those of the future.
- The ReNEW Fund demonstrates the value of a win-win financing approach that can be replicated with employer engagement in other industries.

