

The High Road to Healthcare

The Shirley Ware Education Center (SWEC) is a high road training partnership (H RTP) that creates pathways for California residents from disadvantaged backgrounds to access high quality jobs in the healthcare industry. SWEC focuses on providing innovative education and training solutions to workers interested in pursuing careers in healthcare. A nonprofit, SWEC functions as an intermediary, bringing workers and employers together to meet industry demand in the growing healthcare sector.

In Northern California, SWEC has a long history of developing innovative workforce development programming that promotes access to good quality jobs. Founded by Service Employees International Union United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU-UHW West), SWEC grew out of a need to create career pathways in healthcare for incumbent workers and to train new workers to enter the field. As a labor-market intermediary, SWEC recruits, trains, and creates pathways for incumbent workers to access higher-skill, higher-wage positions that will allow them to achieve their goals and support themselves and their families.

Through the California Workforce Development Board's (CWDB) H RTP initiative, SWEC is creating a training program with the goal of increasing career pathways for allied health workers, health professionals who are not doctors, nurses, or dentists but who work in related areas like direct patient care, disease prevention, rehabilitation, and health systems management. SWEC will identify career pathways

for incumbent environmental services (EVS) and food service workers and provide access for underrepresented populations to enter the healthcare industry. The training program will eventually lead to a registered apprenticeship for nonclinical incumbent workers to transition into clinical positions. The High Road to Healthcare Careers program supports employers, unions, and non-clinical support staff to meet the growing demand in allied health occupations due to population growth, an aging population, and federal healthcare reform.

With support from the CWDBs H RTP initiative, SWEC is making a significant contribution to the field of healthcare workforce development in California in four distinct ways.

CAREER PATHWAYS FOR EVS AND FOOD SERVICE WORKERS

To increase opportunities for upward mobility for janitorial and dietary service workers, SWEC is piloting a training program with two local educational partners- Merritt College and Sierra College- to create allied health career pathways for incumbent workers and to train new workers from Oakland's low-income neighborhoods.

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS THROUGH GREEN-SKILLS CREDENTIALS

SWEC is incorporating environmental stewardship into career pathways through curriculum development and by providing the opportunity for workers to communicate with management about sustainability issues and take on leadership roles with fellow workers on these issues.

ENSURING WORKER SUCCESS

SWEC provides wraparound support services - wage replacement and individualized career planning and exploration - while accelerating career advancement for lower-skilled incumbent workers and creating an on-ramp into the sector for non-clinical seekers.

PROMOTING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Workforce Education Leaders Program (ED Leaders Program) provides opportunities for EVS and food service workers to collaborate with management on

workplace issues, provide input on program design, assist in participant recruitment, and identify professional development opportunities for incumbent workers. Ultimately, employers gain a constant flow of highly trained, highly skilled allied healthcare workers. Entry-level healthcare workers are provided opportunities for professional advancement, resulting in higher-paying jobs and healthier workplaces.

The California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) designed the High Road Training Partnership (H RTP) initiative to model a sector approach that can address critical issues of equity, job quality, and environmental sustainability. H RTPs are industry-based, worker-focused training partnerships that build skills for California’s high road employers—firms that compete based on quality of product and service achieved through innovation and investment in human capital and can thus generate family-supporting jobs where workers have agency and voice.

**For more information, see
<https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>**

THE EVOLUTION OF SWEC: A BRIEF TIMELINE

SWEC is founded

SEIU-UHW West establishes SWEC with funding from the City of Oakland to train new workers from low-income neighborhoods and place them in healthcare jobs.

1998

Joint Employer Education Fund is established

SEIU-UHW West, Kaiser Permanente, and Dignity Health establish the nonprofit Joint Employer Education Fund (Ed Fund), a multi-employer benefit trust fund to deliver training and education for incumbent workers.

2004

Ed Fund creates first apprenticeship

The Ed Fund creates its first registered apprenticeship in healthcare in California, a pilot for ambulatory coders, with the goal of a statewide program for all partnership employers.

2015

Ed Leaders Program gives workers a voice

The ED Leaders Program engages union members in the design and implementation of curriculum development and programming, providing opportunities for leadership development and a voice on the job.

2017

SEIU-UHW West and Ed Fund create pre-apprenticeship

SEIU-UHW West and Ed Fund develop a pre-apprenticeship and curriculum for entry-level workers on basic skills education, environmental stewardship, and career advancement.

Industry Partnerships: Where Demand Meets Supply

The six major occupational groups in the healthcare sector that deal with patient care are healthcare professionals, social service workers, medical technicians, health aides and assistants, food service workers, and cleaning service workers. These groups accounted for 69% of all healthcare jobs in 2005 and 74% in 2015. Healthcare employment is projected to grow nationally by 18% from 2016 to 2026, adding about 2.4 million jobs.

In California, a recent survey commissioned by the Ed Fund estimates that the annual demand for allied health workers is approximately 65,000; by 2024, that number is projected to grow to 400,000. From 2010 to 2020, the metropolitan statistical areas of Oakland/Fremont/Hayward, San Francisco/San Mateo/Redwood City, Sacramento/Arden-Arcade/Roseville, and San Jose/Sunnyvale/Santa Clara are projected to add over 20,000 healthcare jobs in each region. Regional labor shortages are particularly acute in occupations such as medical assistants and certified nursing assistant. And despite declining overall unionization rates, the number of healthcare workers who are members of unions or covered by a collective bargaining agreement has increased. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2017, approximately 600,000, or 18%, of non-physician healthcare workers belonged to a union. As the largest union of hospital workers in the western United States, SEIU-UHW West represents more than 95,000 members.

Healthcare in California will continue to face disruptions due to changing care models, technological advances, labor shortages due to retiring employees, and the need for a well-trained workforce; and employers will have to continually find solutions to labor and skills shortages.

Exacerbating these issues is the lack of affordable training programs. There is an abundance of for-profit educational providers that often leave students heavily in debt. A recent study by the Center for Responsible Lending found that the median debt for students leaving for-profit colleges was \$22,000, regardless of completion status. And those figures were significantly higher for women, middle-aged people,

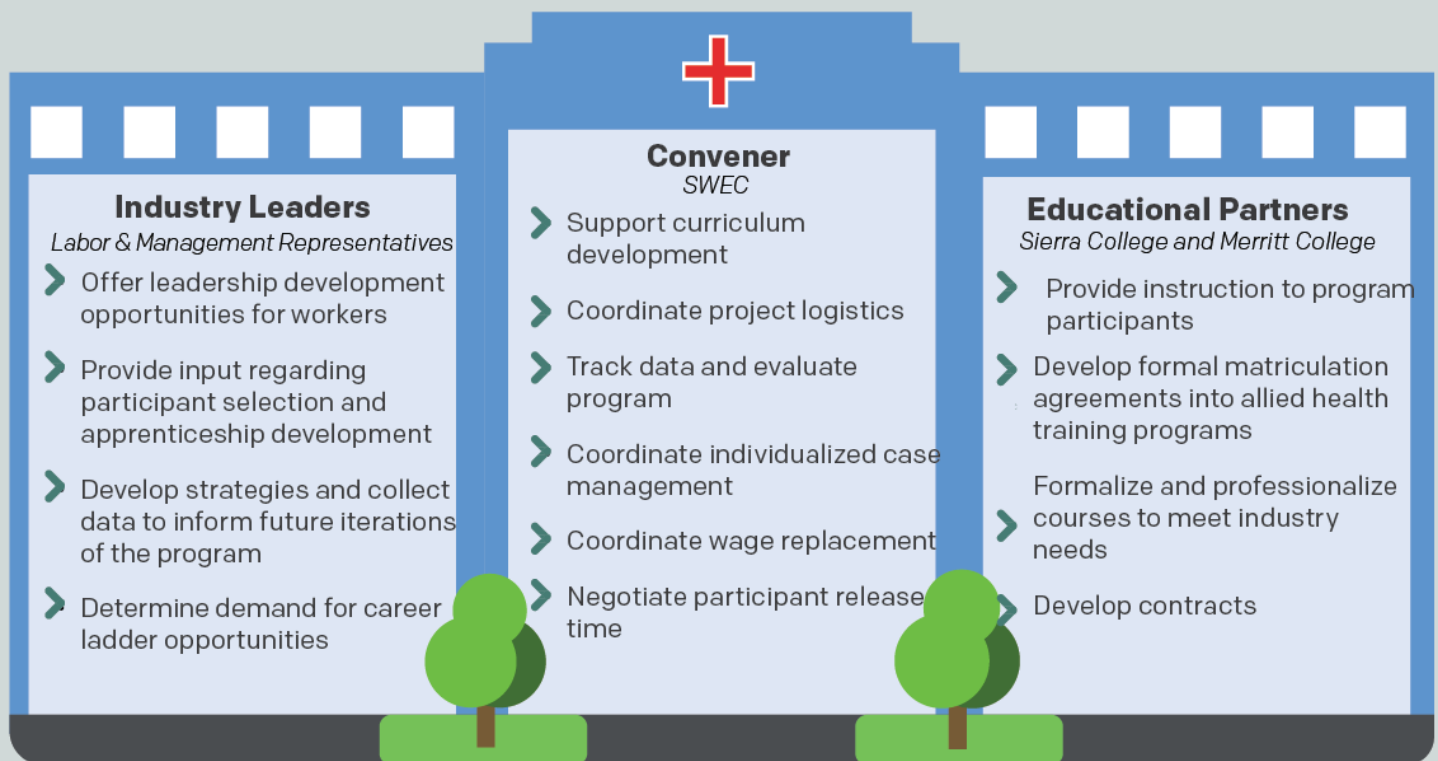
and African Americans. Even more alarming is the number of students whose debt grows beyond the original amount borrowed due to added interest and fees.

To address the demand in allied health occupations, SWEC convenes healthcare employers, union leaders, community college representatives, and workers to develop industry solutions. Working in partnership allows all partners to align their interests and identify common goals. On the demand side, industry leaders identify shared needs, challenges, and goals, which, intermediaries address by identifying workforce development mechanisms on the supply side.

- On the demand side, SWEC is increasing the number of workers in allied health occupations by piloting a training program that will serve as a recruitment pipeline to help employers avert critical labor shortages in the healthcare industry.
- On the supply side, SWEC is providing career advancement opportunities for nonclinical incumbent workers to transition into clinical positions in allied health.

Fig 1. SWEC Partner Roles

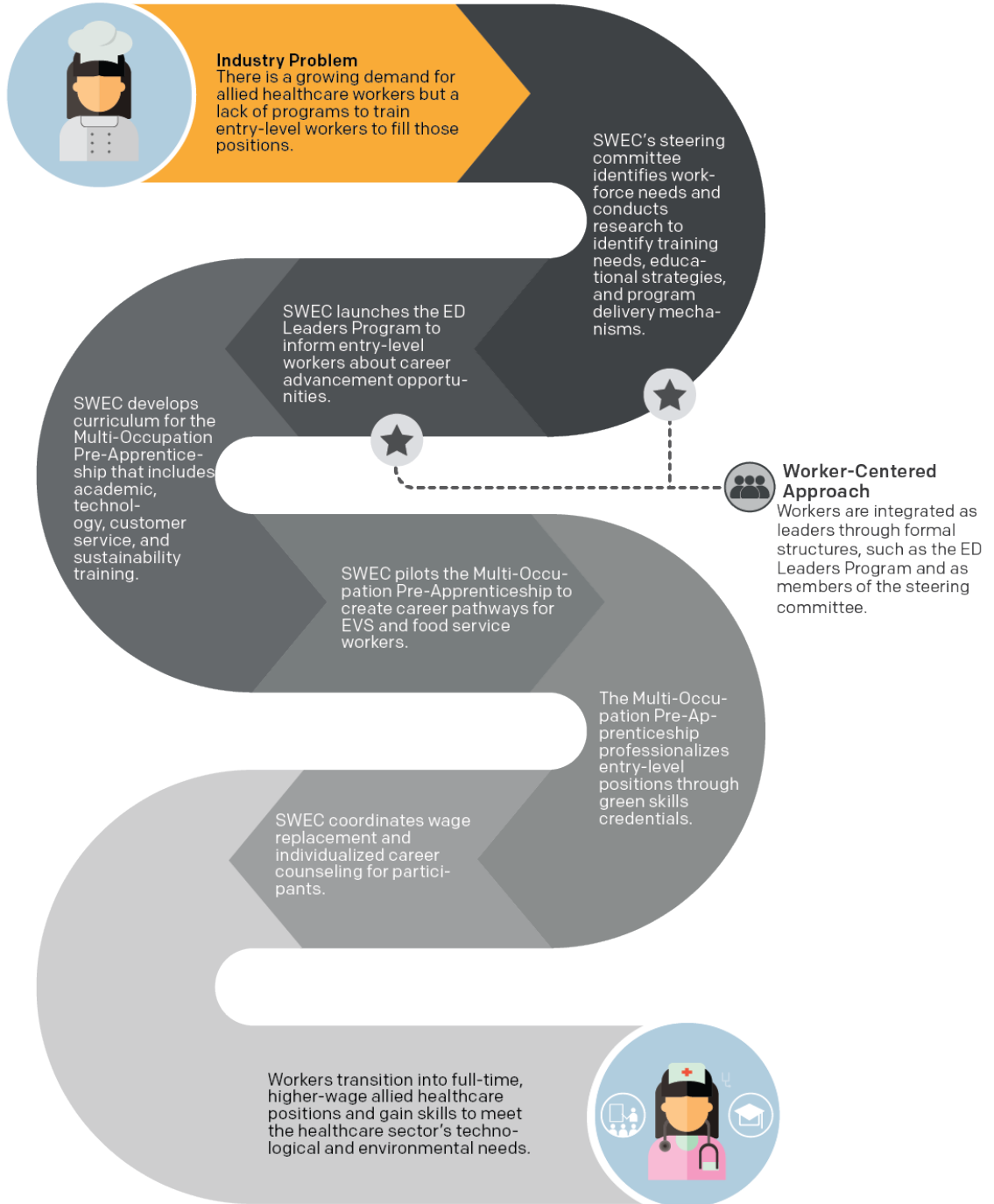
As an intermediary, SWEC convenes a labor-management partnership of industry leaders to identify healthcare industry needs on the demand side and organizes educational partners to find supply-side solutions to address those needs.



The High Road to Healthcare Careers program values the knowledge and expertise of employers, union leaders, and workers and creates formal structures that foster long-lasting relationships centered on trust, common goals, and high road standards. As the intermediary, SWEC facilitates discussions on key industry needs and works with existing workforce development systems, such as community colleges, to develop industry-specific, worker-centered solutions. For example, the steering committee provides industry expertise and programmatic guidance as well as strategic planning on how and where to grow geographically, career pathway development, and worker engagement strategies.

Fig 2. SWEC's High Road Approach in the Healthcare Industry

SWEC's Multi-Occupation Pre-Apprenticeship is a 128-hour, four-month, for-credit program that prepares nonclinical workers to transition into clinical positions.



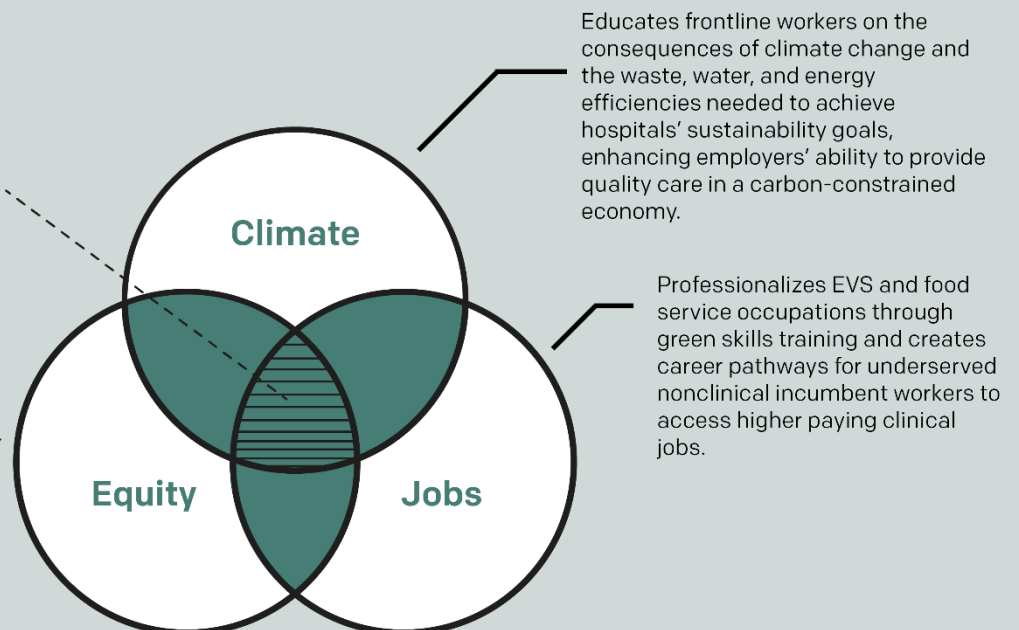
Taking the High Road: Improving Equity, Job Quality, and Climate Resilience

By taking the high road approach to addressing equity, job quality, and climate change, SWEC is creating a pipeline to good jobs and building a better future for healthcare workers in California. SWEC's High Road to Healthcare Careers program promotes sector strategies and interventions focused on equity, sustainability, and job quality. By convening industry leaders, SWEC facilitates discussions on how the Equity, Climate, and Jobs (ECJ) approach can be integrated into workforce development strategies that will simultaneously meet the supply and demand needs of the industry.

Fig 3. Taking the High Road: Improving Equity, Job Quality, and Climate Resilience

SWEC addresses healthcare workforce needs and helps employers reduce their carbon footprints while accelerating career advancement for workers.

Provides access for underrepresented populations and opportunities for upward mobility for entry-level nonclinical staff, a population that has significantly lower utilization rates of Ed Fund services and worker engagement.



ADVANCING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The High Road to Healthcare Careers program is building a training infrastructure for nonclinical incumbent workers - most of whom are members of disadvantaged communities - to gain English proficiency, basic skills, and digital fluency. Workers will develop the skills to transition into in-demand occupations and access career pathways leading to higher wages. Low-skill job seekers gain access to entry-level positions by filling newly vacated positions and follow the same pathway to sustainable employment.

An important element of the High Road to Healthcare Careers program is the integration of worker wisdom. Before the pilot of the pre-apprenticeship, workers participated in focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one interviews to determine interest in a career advancement program and identify program needs, strategies to address barriers to participation, and delivery mechanisms. For example, in the summer of 2017, a survey was conducted in English and Spanish of 1,589 Ed Fund-eligible employees. Workers identified major barriers to education and career advancement—such as time, money, and employer support—and provided curriculum recommendations.

Workers also take on formal roles through programmatic committees. For example, the Ed Leaders Program is a worker-driven initiative that serves as a recruitment tool and sounding board for the High Road to Healthcare Careers program. A working group of worker leaders convenes to help shape program components and identify strategies to expand to other regions and employers. Worker leaders volunteer to help recruit participants into the pre-apprenticeship and become ambassadors of the labor-management partnership. In addition to providing professional development and leadership opportunities, the program promotes the HRTP framework among workers and in the broader healthcare community.

BUILDING ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

SWEC chose Kaiser Permanente as one of its healthcare partners because it is an industry leader in environmental stewardship. Kaiser has a long history of advancing green practices that incorporate worker engagement and promote healthy communities and environment. The core curriculum for the Multi-Occupation Pre-Apprenticeship weaves together sustainability themes that allow workers to see connections between the healthcare industry and their own work and personal lives. Workers receive training on green solutions and learn about the importance of sustainability in healthcare. The curriculum helps incumbent workers gain a better

understanding of the healthcare workplace and industry, health and safety, and sustainability.

The Multi-Occupation Pre-Apprenticeship prepares students to address environmental impacts across career pathways in healthcare. EVS workers, for example, receive training on hazardous material management, waste handling, and the laws regulating processing and disposal. Medical assistants, on the other hand, along with clinical physicians, are the ones who generate waste, so educating them about waste streams is as essential as for food service workers. Equipped with these competencies, workers are empowered to suggest improvements that will accelerate progress toward sustainability goals and help their employers adapt to a carbon-constrained economy. As a result, employers retain workers longer, improve employee health and safety, and create a workplace culture that is aligned with their companies' missions and values; and workers learn sustainability practices that become the norm in hospitals and communities.

DELIVERING SKILLS FOR QUALITY JOBS

The High Road to Healthcare Careers program is creating the training infrastructure to address skills gaps and changes in the industry due to technological advances and automation. Prior to the implementation of the pre-apprenticeship, SWEC convened employers, workers, and union leaders to discuss results from a comprehensive industry needs assessment, which was used to identify core skills and the skills gap for in-demand occupations. The assessment also informed the development of the pre-apprenticeship curricula to ensure they met learner and stakeholder needs.

SWEC is creating the building blocks for an industry-recognized credential for entry-level employment in the dietary and janitorial departments of hospitals and medical offices. The goal is to professionalize these positions and create career pathways for workers who complete the pre-apprenticeship. For example, an entry-level food service worker will have access to a middle-skills job, like medical assistant, and long-term access to a higher-wage job, like registered nurse.

Green skills credentials will also improve workplaces by providing a healthier environment for hospital staff and patients. Workers will have healthier workplaces with safer cleaning products and be recognized for their role in advancing green practices within the broader sustainability movement. Currently, SWEC is researching the possibility of recognizing those with green skills through a wage differential and other opportunities that could lead to higher-wage jobs.

Expanding the High Road

An H RTP's work is never done. H RTPs provide infrastructure for industry problem-solving, and partnerships evolve along with industry problems and leaders. H RTPs must therefore attend to and strengthen their partnerships' commitment to operating with high road values, to influencing their industries, and to improving their communities. The High Road to Healthcare Careers program is developing and piloting a training program designed to meet the shortage of allied health workers in California. To continue to build the high road in healthcare, SWEC will expand and strengthen its H RTP in these ways:

PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONS

SWEC will create the infrastructure to deliver and expand the pre-apprenticeship over the long term and develop worker leaders for a committee to assist with program design, participant recruitment, outcome tracking, and career exploration.

INDUSTRY SYSTEMS CHANGE

SWEC will create an industry-recognized credential for entry-level dietary and janitorial workers to professionalize positions, develop pathways for incumbent workers to access middle-skills jobs, and assist in the reduction of labor shortages in the allied health occupations.

SOCIAL IMPACT

SWEC will provide access for disadvantaged populations to higher-paying jobs in the healthcare sector, promote healthier workers, workplaces, and communities, and assist in the reduction of the carbon footprint of hospitals

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About this Series

Through the HRTP initiative, the CWDB has invested close to \$10 million to develop, refine, and expand a series of skill-focused, industry-based training partnerships that advance equity by linking workforce innovation to regional challenges of job quality, economic mobility, and environmental sustainability. The UCLA Labor Center, commissioned by the CWDB, is leading a two-year evaluation process to understand the successes and challenges of the funded partnerships in building a workforce infrastructure that can holistically address key issues related to equity, climate, and jobs. This is one of a series of eight partnership overviews from UCLA evaluators Ana Luz Gonzalez-Vasquez, Magaly Lopez, and Saba Waheed. For additional overviews and more information about the HRTP initiative, see <https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>.