



Project Description

July 15, 2008

Executive Summary

The Delta is one of the poorest regions in the United States. And poor health follows poverty. Residents of the Delta face greater health disparities than those of the rest of the nation on several key health indicators. Alongside much of the nation, Arkansas is facing a shortage of nursing personnel. And evidence suggests that an inadequate nursing workforce contributes to poor health outcomes. While many individuals may be interested in entering nursing, those with lower education levels and skills often face barriers to such goals. [REDACTED] operates an innovative program that is yielding significant results in addressing these barriers, in turn addressing the nursing shortage in the Delta, positively impacting the health of Arkansans. To continue its work of preparing and educating nursing assistants and helping them move along the path to higher levels of nursing education, [REDACTED] requests \$50,000 to support its Career Pathways (CP) program in 2009. During 2009, CP has set ambitious enrollment, graduation, job placement, and job retention goals that, if met, will contribute to a stronger health care workforce in Arkansas's Delta region.

Area Needs

[REDACTED]'s CP program focuses on Jefferson County, Arkansas, in the heart of the Delta. In addition to high poverty and unemployment rates, the Delta region faces stark health care issues. According to the Delta Regional Authority, the 2002 infant mortality rates in the Delta were close to 30 percent higher than the national rate; people living in the Delta have disabilities almost 25 percent more frequently than people living in the rest of the United States; and deaths from circulatory diseases are 21.2 percent higher, deaths from cancer are 12.7 percent higher, and deaths from accidents are 42 percent higher in the Delta than in the rest of the country.

A major problem that contributes to these poor health outcomes is one that is increasingly recognized as a nationwide problem: the shortage of nurses. Studies have shown that an inadequate nursing workforce yields a lower quality of patient care. A review of literature by Diane Heine in the January/February 2003 issue of *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing* reported that with each additional patient per nurse, "surgical patients experience a 7% increase in 30-day mortality and 7% increase in odds of failure to rescue rates (death from complications)." And the converse has been found to be true: according to a synthesis of nursing research studies in 2004 by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, a "10-percent increase in the number of licensed nurses is estimated to decrease lung collapse [in patients] by 1.5 percent, pressure ulcers by 2 percent, falls by 3 percent, and UTIs by less than 1 percent." Nurses themselves understand this problem well. The April 2005 issue of *Nursing Economic\$* reports that 98 percent of RNs surveyed see the nursing shortage in the future contributing to an increase in stress on nurses, and 93 percent see the shortage as lowering the quality of patient care and as contributing to nurses leaving the profession. National turnover rates for nursing assistants are cited as being between 45 and 105 percent, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration's Bureau of Health Professions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projected that between the years 2000 and 2010, 1.2 million additional nursing assistants

and other similar healthcare professionals will be needed to meet the increasing demand for services and replace departing employees, a need that is unlikely to be met. The pattern of increasing demand for nurses also holds for ██████'s target region. Jefferson County is located in the Southeast Arkansas Workforce Investment Area, one of ten such areas for which the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) makes industry projections. They project an increase of 23.8 percent between 2002 and 2012 in the number of nursing assistants required for the region to meet future demand, an increase of 12.4 percent for LPNs, and an increase of 22.5 percent for RNs.

A significant factor driving the need for more nursing personnel is the impending increase in the older population, as the large "baby-boom" generation ages and as newer technologies allow people with terminal illnesses to live longer while still requiring long-term care. The nursing workforce also can expect large numbers of retirements in the coming years as "baby-boomer" nurses and nursing assistants reach the retirement age. Because of the large increase in demand for nurses and nursing assistants and the larger number of expected retirements from the existing nursing workforce, Arkansas faces a challenge in training and certifying enough new nurse personnel to meet the state's health care needs. In the Delta region, however, the challenge of training enough nurses to meet future demands is further complicated by the low education levels of the population. The 2000 Census indicated that 25.2 percent of the adult population in Jefferson County has less than a high school education. Further, in ██████'s experience, possession of a diploma is no guarantee of readiness for a nursing curriculum. Ability testing conducted by ██████ counselors indicates that 43 percent of would-be students holding high school diplomas display literacy and math skills below the sixth-grade level. Among individuals with GEDs, 91 percent test below the sixth-grade level. Further evidence of this problem was revealed in a report by ██████'s Public Policy program. This report showed that remediation in basic academic skills is necessary for 90 percent of students who enroll in the region's community colleges. But these remedial courses amount to a barrier to students' success. Only 16 percent of full-time students enrolled in remedial courses at the two-year colleges complete a certificate or degree or obtain a transfer to a four-year institution within three years.

Program History and Design

CP began in 1999 as the Industry Partners program and expanded over the years to include partnerships with the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK), and Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas. In 2003 in Pine Bluff and in 2005 in Helena-West Helena, these partners began the development of comprehensive career pathways in nine high-demand fields, including nursing and allied health, to address the needs of employers and students alike. In 2005, ██████'s Public Policy program helped bring about a statewide effort, the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (ACPI), which was funded by a two-year, \$16 million agency appropriation, to recreate the CP model at nine other community colleges. In July 2007, it was expanded to all 22 Arkansas two-year colleges and three technical schools. Over 7,747 students have enrolled in the ACPI to date. Between 1999 and 2004, when ██████ and its partners operated the nursing assistant program as part of the Industry Partners program, 622 participants graduated and became CNAs. Through ██████'s participation in the ACPI program beginning in 2005, 205 students have become CNAs, 49 have become LPNs, and 20 have become RNs.

Effective July 1, 2008, several changes have been implemented that modify the way we operate our CP partnership with SEARK. While the pathways themselves will remain intact, the counselors who were previously employed by ██████ have become employees of SEARK. These counselors will continue to provide assessment and counseling services to CP students and will work with them to obtain supportive services such as child care and transportation. ██████ will continue to offer our nursing assistant class in Pine Bluff. All nursing assistant students who are eligible for ACPI will

work with the counseling staff at SEARK to create individual career plans and enter and navigate the pathways; they will also receive ongoing case management from the SEARK CP counselors. [REDACTED] will work with SEARK to track all nursing assistant graduates who have gone on to other nursing and allied health programs at the college and will continue to help our nursing assistant graduates access those programs as well.

As stated above, [REDACTED] runs an eight-week nursing assistant training program. This training program addresses the challenges faced by the low-income, low-skilled participants [REDACTED] serves. By entering the nursing education pathway at the nursing assistant level, participants are taught in a setting that is designed to meet their educational needs. And, because many of [REDACTED]'s participants must work while continuing to the next step on the pathway, they can work as CNAs and earn income needed to support themselves and their families.

Six cycles of the program are offered each year. The eight-week program includes four weeks of classroom instruction and four weeks of clinical practice for a total of 240 contact hours. The program is approved by the Office of Long Term Care (OLTC) at the Arkansas Department of Human Services. It is licensed by the Arkansas Board of Private Career Education. The total number of hours in the program is over two and a half times the 90 hours required by OLTC. SEARK awards a certificate of proficiency to nursing assistant program graduates and offers five hours of college credit for those nursing assistant students who have a high school diploma or GED. Additionally, SEARK plans to begin requiring, as of the Fall 2009 semester, its LPN students to complete a nursing assistant program as a prerequisite course. Topics covered in the classroom portion of the program are listed in the table below. Classes are taught using a variety of adult-learner techniques including lecture, discussion, hands-on practice, and role play.

Table 1. Nursing Assistant Class Topics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and professional communication • Introduction to medical abbreviations • Universal precautions/infectious disease and hand washing/isolation procedures and signs and symptoms • Body systems and body mechanics • Safety and legal and ethical issues • Military time and bed making • Dressing and undressing a resident • Hair care, shaving, hand and foot care • Bed baths, tub baths, showers, backrubs, oral hygiene • Bladder and bowel elimination • Admission, discharge, transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood pressure, temperature, pulse, and respiration • Skin care, restorative care • Height and weight, nutrition • Basic human needs, death and dying • Range of motion/transfer and positioning/restraints • Alzheimer's disease, fractures, Parkinson's disease, diabetes • Tobacco cessation and prevention/respiratory disorders, cardiovascular disease • Documentation/home health care • CPR • Barbara Broyles Alzheimer's training

The four-week clinical section of the program provides an opportunity for students to see a variety of workplaces, get a better handle on the work environment, and practice their newly learned skills on real patients and residents. [REDACTED] strives to provide students a range of clinical experiences that includes both hospital and long-term care settings. The current clinical sites in Pine Bluff are Davis Life Care Center, Jefferson Regional Medical Center, and White Hall Nursing Center.

At the end of the eight-week program the student goes to a testing site where a proctor RN observes and administers skills tests as well as written exams. The Arkansas Nursing Assistant Competency Examination consists of two separate tests that evaluate the knowledge and skills required to provide safe and competent care. The first part is the clinical skills test that requires candidates to demonstrate skills performed in the care of long term care facility residents. The second portion is the



written test that consists of 60 percent multiple choice questions that test the overall knowledge of the applicant. If the applicant passes, he or she receives a state certification.

Graduates of the CNA training have three options, depending on their abilities and experience. (1) They may seek employment as a CNA. SEARK counselors will help all ACPI-eligible students, and [REDACTED]'s nursing instructor and program director will help all other students, with job placement and retention. Once obtaining employment, they may work for a while and then decide to pursue additional training. (2) They may pursue LPN training, depending on their test scores and experience. If they score between a 9th and 12th grade level, they may enroll in SEARK's Fast-Track LPN program (depending on availability), through which they can satisfy developmental education requirements in one semester instead of two or more, and also prerequisites in one semester instead of two or more. (SEARK currently limits this course to 30 students per year, so some students will also take the traditional LPN program's developmental education). Or if they pass the college entrance exams and require no developmental education, they can enroll in the LPN program directly (or after satisfying prerequisite requirements). (3) Similarly, eligible CNA graduates can also enroll directly in SEARK's and the University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff's RN programs.

This project targets the residents of Jefferson County, Arkansas. According to 2000 Census data, 26.1 percent of county residents are under age 18, 12.8 percent are 65 years and over, 49.3 percent are African American, 20.5 percent live in poverty, and 8.3 percent are unemployed. And simply by living in the Delta as indicated above, they have more infant deaths; are more frequently disabled; and are more likely to die from circulatory diseases, cancer, and accidents. CP, by training people to become nursing assistants and nurses, is working to reverse these health care disparities. Since the program's inception, CP participants have had the following characteristics: 77 percent are ages 18-35, 91 percent are female, 77 percent are African American, 18 percent lack a high school diploma or GED, 63 percent have incomes under \$5,000, and 75 percent have children under 19.

As stated above, SEARK plans to begin requiring its LPN students to have completed a nursing assistant program as a prerequisite course, beginning in the Fall 2009 semester. This new requirement could create an opportunity for SEARK to pay tuition dollars to [REDACTED], as the only nursing assistant program provider in the area, to make the program available to all would-be LPN students. On the other hand, it could also create the opportunity for the college to begin offering the class itself. In either situation, a much-needed nursing assistant program will be sustained.

Goals & Objectives

Table 2. Career Pathways Goals, Objectives, and Work Plan 2009		
Activities	Outcome Objectives	Time Period
Program Orientation	Enroll 65 CNA students.	Program orientation is held the first day of each program cycle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll eligible participants in ACPI and connect them with SEARK counselors and supportive services • Provide counseling and supportive services for non-ACPI participants • Graduation 	80% of those enrolled will graduate.	Graduation dates occur throughout the year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide job placement assistance • Provide job retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of graduates will earn employment or continued higher education enrollment. 	Job placement, higher education, and retention activities are continuous.



<p>follow-up and assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% of graduates will retain their jobs or remain enrolled in higher education for six months. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help graduates enroll in the next step on the nursing pathway • Track job placement, retention, and next step data for these students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of nursing assistant graduates will directly enroll in the next step on the nursing pathway. • 80% of these students will graduate from SEARK’s LPN program • 80% of these graduates will earn employment or continued higher education enrollment. • 65% of graduates will retain their jobs or remain enrolled in higher education for six months. 	<p>Job placement, higher education, and retention activities are continuous.</p>

Organizational Capacity & Staff

██████████’s capacity to deliver these above outcomes, which will positively benefit the health care of Arkansas Delta residents, is indicated by its connection to a major community development effort; its partnerships; its history of turning low-income students into well-trained CNAs, LPNs, and RNs; its statewide and national recognition as a workforce development model; and its dedicated staff. ██████████ is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, headquartered in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, with a mission of increasing the incomes and assets of low-income and low-skilled residents of rural Arkansas and the Mississippi Delta. As an affiliate of ██████████—a \$575 million development bank holding company with a family of three local banks and three nonprofit development organizations—██████████ is aligned with a comprehensive effort at economic and community development in one of the last remaining regions of endemic poverty in the United States.

CP staff includes a director and a nurse instructor. The program director is responsible for overall program operation. Our nurse instructor teaches the nursing assistant course. The program director and nurse instructor will also provide counseling and supportive services for students who are not eligible to receive these services through ACPI. SEARK’s counselors will provide these services to all ACPI-eligible students. Program staff can also make use of the services of ██████████’s two credit counselors to assist participants facing credit issues that, for instance, prevent eligibility for financial aid. ██████████’s diverse staff bring many talents, skills, and experiences to their jobs from various fields, including banking, teaching, social, work, nursing, local industry, research, the state legislature, and the United States Congress.

The CP program has a varied funding base that has enabled ██████████ to graduate a total of 827 nursing assistant students since 1999. A potential future funding source is the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission, which is funding CP in 2008, and to which we have a pending proposal for 2009. ██████████’s financial supporters for the past three years are listed in the attached document. Additionally, ██████████ is moving toward a more sustainable relationship with SEARK with regards to the CP nursing assistant program. As stated on page 3 above, SEARK intends to require all of its LPN students to be CNAs upon admission beginning with the Fall 2009 semester. Currently, ██████████ is the only nursing assistant program provider in the area. If SEARK decides to continue working with ██████████ to deliver the nursing assistant program, ██████████ could receive tuition money from SEARK that will cover a substantial portion of the program’s funding needs. If, on the other hand, SEARK decides to offer its own nursing assistant program, ██████████ will discontinue this piece of CP and will be available to focus on other workforce development needs in the region. The funds requested from the Blue & You Foundation will help ██████████ deliver the nursing assistant program while we determine the characteristics of a sustainable relationship with SEARK.