Healthcare staff are in high demand on tribal reservations in the Great Plains region. In 2015, the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Health Board received a five-year grant to conduct training for Native Americans to address this demand while giving low-income individuals a chance to forward their careers.

Pathways to Healthcare Professions is offered in a cross section of urban sites, rural areas, and reservations across western South Dakota. This program provides support services for recipients to obtain basic skills education that will lead to a career ladder or recognized credential that is in demand by the local healthcare industry. Services include housing, academic supports, case management, child care, transportation assistance, tuition assistance, mental health services, alcohol/drug assessment and treatment, rental and utility assistance, and job placement.

Pathways to Healthcare Professions works with a network of over 25 state and local partners to provide healthcare instruction, job readiness services, and employment opportunities. These partners include academic institutions, healthcare facilities, and state and tribal agencies.

The program also actively engages with employers. One example is Employer Day, held during the CNA and Med Aide training. Employers are given the opportunity to discuss their company, job openings, and benefits with all the students.

Since 2016, Pathways to Healthcare Professions has enrolled more than 366 participants in healthcare training. More than 315 participants have completed at least one healthcare training since 2016, and 145 participants have gained employment in healthcare.