



Three Steps to Building an Effective Internal Agency

Analytics | Acquisition | Deployment

Turnover, vacancies, and the constrained access to talent have been challenges for healthcare organizations for the past three years. Today, in efforts to control costs, and help ensure greater control and access to flexible staffing solutions, some health systems are establishing internal agencies.

Organizations that find success with internal agencies will be the ones that take a strategic approach to its formation, as well as leverage the necessary technologies to support all components.

This resource will walk through the key components of establishing an internal agency, including the use of analytics to analyze the size and mix of staff needed, strategies to acquire staff, and deployment methodologies to deliver staff to areas of need.



What is an Internal Agency?

An Internal Agency is a dedicated internal contingency staff layer that serves your organization, under your requirements, policies, and employment.

These staff members typically have longer term assignments, are incentivized for their flexibility but remain employed by your organization or a subsidiary.

1 Analyzing Your Situation

Having the right mix of core and contingent/flexible resources allows for the cost-effective management of the workforce based on patient volume and ensures quality by optimizing staff levels and empowering individuals to work at the top of their training and licensing.

The first phase of establishing an internal agency, or any staffing strategy, is to analyze your current staffing levels (supply), volumes (patient demand), and workload indicators to begin to identify needs and the possible reallocation of resources.

A workforce analysis will look at historical resource utilization data by specialty for core, flexible/float staff, and agency, as well as the inputs listed above to identify the proper number of core staff and the optimal size and layering of internal flexible resources, i.e., float pools, needed to meet typical patient demand department by department.

An internal agency, one of the layers of your flexible resources, is a custom solution, and variability of demand as well as the proper staff sizing targets from a workforce analysis will help determine the size of an internal agency needed to support the varying levels of predicted demand.

It is recommended that a workforce analysis or internal audit be conducted yearly, if not quarterly, to ensure the size of various staffing sources are optimized for your organization's demand.

2 Acquiring Your Agency Staff

Once the workforce analytics have illuminated the size and mix of staff required for the internal agency to support the organization, sourcing talent begins. This can happen in different ways and/or a combination of tactics.

Looking Inward

The first tactic is two-fold: Engage with and attract RNs who had left the organization for travel nurse roles and provide an internal agency option to current RNs who have expressed interest in leaving the organization for travel nursing careers.

It is important for healthcare organizations to provide opportunities for clinicians who may want more flexibility in when and where they work. Providing schedule options that can change throughout the lifecycle of a career provides a positive impact on recruitment and retention.

One of the top academic medical centers in the United States utilized this approach and received more than 500 applications when hiring for their new internal agency. 186 offers were made initially, 40 of which went to and were accepted by RNs who had been identified as planning to leave the organization.

» [Read more about this story here.](#)



Direct Sourcing

Another approach is direct sourcing. Many healthcare organizations already enjoy strong brand recognition, whether it is local, regional, national, or even global. Utilizing that brand to attract clinicians interested in travel to their internal agencies can provide a good foundation. With the right infrastructure in place, many organizations can leverage their strong brand and help reduce the costs of acquiring those resources and do so faster.

With direct sourcing, an organization is given the technology to attract talent on their own. Leveraging their internal applicant tracking system, they can attract clinicians through the same process as they would attract a full-time position.

A mobile application can be added that integrates, syncs, and automates posting on job sites. The profiles flow back and forth with a database that gives access to specific organizations and jobs. The clinicians upload their credentials and can be vetted and approved. This takes the recruiter out of the process and increases the speed to hire.



3 Managing and Deploying Your Workforce

Whether an organization utilizes a vendor management system (VMS) or an internal scheduling tool, there is a need for technology to manage both the internal, core and float resources, as well as external agency.

These tools can automate unique workflows and integrate with internal technologies including multiple timekeeping, ATS, ERP, accounting, and educational systems. A VMS allows organizations to manage internal and external resources through one platform. Healthcare systems can leverage the technology to store the credentials for all healthcare professionals and monitor for expiration dates, reducing the heavy administrative burden and the risk of clinicians working without the proper credentials. These tools can include an integrated mobile application that allows all resource pool members and agency staff – internal and external – to search and pick up shifts with permissions and approval processes included as well as time keeping and communication tools to drive efficiency and engagement. With an app, the clinicians swipe to request a travel assignment, and the healthcare organization can approve or reject that based on compliance and other requirements. The clinician receives communication automatically, and once the manager receives the information on the assignment, it can be entered into the scheduling system, either manually or via feed.

The organization can decide what level of service they need to attract and manage talent. It may be that a system has a centralized resource management center and can choose to self-manage an internal agency with the support of a VMS. Others may choose to use a MSP to manage all aspects of the process.

Deployment Strategy

Once the schedules are created, the success of the day-to-day utilization of the internal agency hinges on the effectiveness of the deployment strategies an organization adopts. Like the other parts of establishing an internal agency, the deployment strategy should be fully customized.

One example of a deployment strategy is a four-layer protocol.

The first layer is made up of core staff members. These healthcare professionals are assigned to a home unit and will expect to work shifts on their home unit the majority of the time.

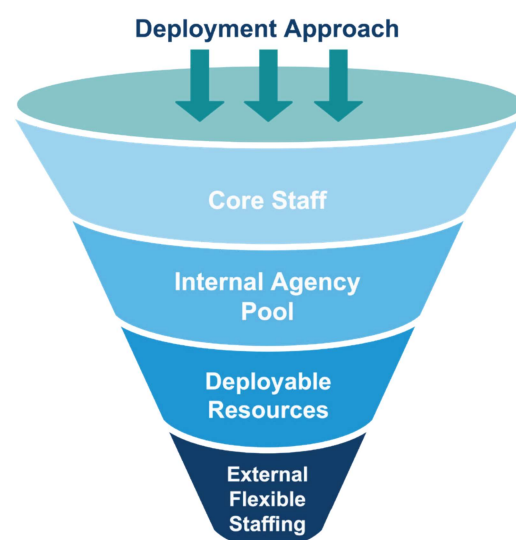
Next is the Internal Agency Pool. With the use of a predictive scheduling tool, members of the internal agency can be confirmed to the areas of greatest need up to two weeks in advance of the shift. If a predictive tool is not in place,

a tool that provides transparency into enterprise-wide needs and is centrally managed can be used to assign staff out the day of the shift, or blocked ahead of time if demand is known.

The third layer of the protocol is made up of internal, FTE float resources and can be placed by the central staffing office two hours before the shift.

Sample, Four-Layer Deployment Approach

Each organization's deployment methodology will vary depending on the numbers and types of staffing sources of the organization, typically dictated by the variability of demand.



Client Success Story

A multi-location East Coast Academic Medical System wanted to establish an internal agency float pool as well as a centralized way to manage both internal and external staff from a single platform.

The white-labeled VMS solution was successfully customized to the specific needs of the client, becoming the glue that holds all critical systems together. Working seamlessly, the solution eliminated manual processes and redundant systems while managing 22 labor categories, both internal and external including more than 80 suppliers all within the same, centrally managed portal.

CHALLENGE

- 700+ Internal Resource Pool Providers managed manually
- Cumbersome to manually pull data from multiple systems
- No internal processes or controls for approved use of labor

SOLUTION

- Implemented b4health with single sign on for non-clinical and clinical staff
- Central Staffing Office uses the platform to serve 60 locations across the system
- Integrated with 13 internal mission-critical technologies

SUCCESS METRICS

- 1,500+ job titles housed in technology
- 17,000 open per diem shift needs filled on average per month
- 700+ Internal Resource Pool members managed
- 80+ clinical and non-clinical staffing suppliers managed

Strategic Support for Your Journey

Many health systems are focusing efforts on reducing reliance on traditional staffing agencies to help lower costs. Establishing an internal agency can be a solution, but successfully creating one takes know-how, a customized strategy, and the technology tools to bring it to life. Establishing a multi-level flexible internal workforce allows for external agency to only be used as a highly strategic resource to supplement the internal flexibility of the organization when needed.

Learn how you can leverage our experience, technology, and dedication to help you create a more flexible, cost-effective workforce at [AMNHealthcare.com](https://www.AMNHealthcare.com).