

Achieve Partners Bets on Apprenticeships to Uplift Careers—and Investment Returns

The impact investor has raised \$450 million to acquire companies that address workforce disruption caused by rapid technological shifts like AI

By [Maria Armental](#) | April 22, 2026

Education investor Achieve Partners has raised a \$450 million fund to tackle artificial intelligence-related labor displacement in the technology and healthcare sectors, betting on on-the-job training to help close skill and experience gaps.



Alicja Jeworska is an apprentice in a program run by Westside Children's Therapy, which Achieve Partners backed last year. Photo: BEN PEYSER

“Apprenticeship programs have remained very strong in the trades and other blue-collar jobs,” Achieve Managing Director Daniel Pianko said. “What we believe is that early-learning pathways are going to be increasingly important for white-collar jobs as well.”

Pianko founded New York-based Achieve with Ryan Craig, a Warburg Pincus veteran with whom he worked at education investor University Ventures. Achieve’s two other managing directors are onetime UV colleagues Aanand Radia and Troy Williams.

The fund

Established last year, Achieve Partners Workforce Fund II collected \$450 million, more than doubling the \$180 million the firm raised for a predecessor vehicle in 2019.

Backers of the latest vehicle include private-markets consulting firm Cambridge Associates along with banking giant JPMorgan Chase’s asset-management unit and Ingka Investments. Ingka is the investment arm of Ingka Group, which owns most IKEA home-furnishing stores globally.

As with the earlier vehicle, Achieve is pursuing “a very classic, lower middle-market buyout strategy,” Pianko said.

“But with a slight twist, which is that we specifically target companies in areas of the economy with a talent shortage,” Pianko said. “We look for companies where the founder says, ‘My biggest problem is I cannot find enough trained talent.’”

A focus on training and retraining workers, he said, helps businesses grow faster, generating higher profit margins. “Our value-add is broader than just a traditional lower middle-market, private-equity fund,” he said.

The firm recently struck a roughly \$465 million deal to sell Optimum Healthcare IT, the first company it backed from its \$180 million debut fund, to Indian information-technology services provider Infosys. An IT services firm focused on health records, Optimum runs a paid apprentice program.

The strategy

Achieve looks to invest in North American healthcare and technology businesses in areas facing significant labor shortages, such as nursing, behavioral health and data-center operations.

One focus area is cybersecurity, where AI is already automating routine tasks, and companies are increasingly looking to hire more seasoned professionals to handle ever more complex systems.

Achieve focuses on early career training, betting that apprenticeships provide workers entering an industry on-the-job training to help them gain experience and learn needed skills.

The firm expects to make eight to 12 control investments from the latest fund, typically writing checks for up to \$75 million to back companies that earn \$5 million to \$20 million on annual revenue of up to \$200 million.

In its first investment from the new fund, Achieve acquired pediatric healthcare company Westside Children’s Therapy last year, Pianko said.

“What we’re seeing is a lot of exciting areas of growth due to technological changes or demographic changes that we think will drive a lot of really attractive, secular growth opportunities,” Pianko said.

Achieve expects to make more healthcare investments from the new fund than it has out of its debut fund, which still has capital available to invest. This month, for example, Achieve disclosed an investment in FutureFit AI, an AI-powered company that helps workers going through career transitions.

Overall, Pianko said Achieve expects healthcare to account for about a third of commitments from the new fund once it is fully invested and tech services and business services for the remainder.

The context

The U.S. labor force has stagnated as hiring has slowed and the share of working-age adults either employed or looking for a job—what’s known as the labor-force participation rate—has reached its lowest level since 1977, excluding the pandemic period.

Still, the U.S. economy continues to grow as workforce productivity rises.

“We are at a crossroads,” Pianko said. The American dream, the ethos that those who work hard will get ahead, seems to no longer hold true for many, he said.

“We see immense value in creating programs that give young Americans a pathway to a six-figure job,” Pianko said.

Beyond the social value, such training programs help the performance of the firm’s investments, Pianko said.

“There is a talent arbitrage that we are able to take advantage of to drive better returns for our investors.”