

Healthcare Anchor Network:

Health Systems Collaborating to Build Inclusive, Local Economies

Overview and History

In December 2016, leaders from 40 health systems across the U.S. gathered in Washington, DC to explore how their systems could more fully harness their economic power to inclusively and sustainably benefit the long-term health and well-being of the communities they serve. This convening led to the launch of the Healthcare Anchor Network in May 2017, representing a critical milestone in mobilizing the healthcare sector towards action and collaboration. The Healthcare Anchor Network helps participants to more rapidly and effectively advance an anchor mission approach within their health institutions, the communities they serve, and across the healthcare sector.

The long-term goal of the Network is to reach a critical mass of health systems adopting as an institutional priority to improve community health and well-being by leveraging all their assets, including hiring, purchasing, and investment for equitable, local economic impact. By doing so, we can powerfully impact the upstream determinants of health and help build inclusive and sustainable local economies.

The Network is supported through a backbone organization (The Democracy Collaborative, with support from CoCreative Consulting). Founding members of the Healthcare Anchor Network include Advocate Health Care, Catholic Health Initiatives, Dignity Health, Henry Ford Health System, Kaiser Permanente, ProMedica, Providence St. Joseph Health, Rush University Medical Center, RWJBarnabas Health, Trinity Health, and UMass Memorial Health Care.

Today, 40 hospitals and health systems are Network members, bringing together anchor institutions from across the country that collectively employ more than 1 million people, purchase over \$50 billion annually, and have over \$150 billion in investment assets.

“Recognizing the inseparable relationship between the social determinants of health and health outcomes, it is essential for health care to play a leadership role in addressing the systemic inequities that prevent members of our communities from experiencing good health. RWJBarnabas Health is extremely proud to be a co-founding member of the Healthcare Anchor Network. Together, as anchor institutions, we share a mission of developing more effective strategies and innovative solutions to leverage our purchasing, hiring, and investing to benefit the communities we serve.”

—Barry H. Ostrowsky,
President and Chief Executive Officer, RWJBarnabas Health

Activities of the Network

The Healthcare Anchor Network convenes health systems in order to share best practices for advancing an Anchor Mission approach within their health institutions, address common challenges, co-develop new tools, and identify areas where collaborative efforts may be possible.

Network members have identified priority areas for the work they are advancing together, with initial initiative groups focused around:

- Advancing the organizational imperative for adopting and implementing an Anchor Mission
- Effective collaboration with community stakeholders in implementing anchor strategies
- Building evidence of the impact of these strategies
- Developing a shared policy and advocacy agenda around addressing upstream determinants of health
- Implementing anchor strategies around inclusive, local hiring and internal workforce development; place-based investing; and inclusive, local purchasing
- Leveraging internal and external philanthropy to accelerate these strategies

Network members advance their work and shared learning through monthly peer-to-peer initiative workgroups, two in-person convenings annually, and deep-dive webinars on topics determined by members. Through the Network’s structured learning opportunities, members can share their experiences candidly with a group of like-minded peers and learn about challenges, innovations, and best practices from peer institutions.

“When there is an abundance of turmoil, uncertainty, and criticism, high performing systems will choose to act. Not waiting for the next legislative directives, the Healthcare Anchor Network was formed to build forward towards what patients, employers, and communities need now. The commitment to common values and the broader mission of health has brought these organizations together to share wisdom and to use all of our assets to humbly help lead, partner and create more vibrant, durable and equitable communities.”

—Jeff Thompson, MD
CEO Emeritus, Executive Advisor Gundersen Health System

Our Call to Action

Hospitals and health systems are critical local economic engines and mission-driven organizations inextricably linked to the long-term well-being of those we serve—because of this, we as healthcare leaders, are uniquely positioned and incentivized to play a more active role in supporting our local economies. We have an opportunity and obligation to improve health and well-being outcomes in the communities we serve and confront economic and social instability in our nation that remain obstacles to that goal.

We believe that the Healthcare Anchor Network is a critical platform that will help us realize the healing mission of our organizations in the 21st century and help address these challenges. The time is now for an expansion and deepening of this work in our communities, and leaders in the field are rising to the occasion. We hope your hospital or health system will join us in advancing the Anchor Mission of healthcare.

Membership

Membership in the Healthcare Anchor Network is open to representatives of all health systems that can bring their energy, insight, and innovation to the collective work. We hope you and your hospital or health system will join us in advancing the Anchor Mission of healthcare—and, in the process, meaningfully improving community health and well-being outcomes for those we serve and across our nation.

For further information on joining the Healthcare Anchor Network, please reach out directly to Dave Zuckerman at dave@democracycollaborative.org.

“Improving social, economic and environmental determinants of health is vital to Dignity Health’s healing mission. This requires a systemwide commitment to collaboration and justice, and a strong calling to the humanity within all of us. Our engagement with other members of the Healthcare Anchor Network is a strategic opportunity to learn from one another and to each do our part to build community wealth while advancing health equity in the communities we serve.”

—Tessie Cuillermo
Chair, Board of Directors
Dignity Health

“As health care leaders, we have economic leverage. We are often the major employer in the surrounding community where a hospital is located. We create jobs; we have political clout in the community; we have social influence. We need to use our clout to create an environment where people can live healthy lives, because health and social factors are interconnected. Disparities in health care exist mainly because of socio-economic conditions. If we don’t resolve these issues, we are not going to realize the health outcomes we seek for vulnerable people despite our best efforts. The Healthcare Anchor Network understands this imperative and is bringing healthcare systems together to work to address the social issues. The mutual learning of how to take on this massive challenge of addressing and correcting social determinants is invaluable.”

—Ram Raju
Senior Vice President and Community
Health Investment Officer, Northwell Health

Former CEO, NYC Health and Hospitals &
Former CEO, Cook County Health and Hospitals System

Current Network Participants (40)

The following list includes the initial 11 systems that helped create this framework, as well as other hospitals and health systems that have joined the Network to date as of October 2018:

