

Healthcare Anchor Network
CONVENING
October 8-10, 2025 | BOSTON

ROOTED & RESILIENT



**Boston
Children's
Hospital**



UMass Memorial Health

**BOSTON
MEDICAL**
CENTER



HIGHLIGHTS

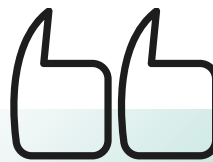
HAN's largest convening yet brought together more than 350 people for an energizing experience filled with connection and learning about and beyond our host city of Boston. Whether you were able to join us or not, we've gathered a handful of our top takeaways and moments for reflection below.

The HAN Annual Convening 2025 kicked-off with a powerful conversation exploring the historical and present-day dynamics of Massachusetts and Greater Boston—a region with a high concentration of healthcare systems. Local esteemed experts discussed how anchor institutions can boost the resilience of communities and contribute to meaningful, people-centered change.

Designed to frame the sessions that followed, the first plenary, "*The Power of Place-Based Collaboration*," was moderated by Dr. Thea James, Vice President of Mission and Associate Chief Medical Officer at Boston Medical Center.

The session was prefaced by a heartfelt "Welcome to Boston" greeting from HAN President & Founder David Zuckerman, who called upon attendees to normalize anchor mission strategies to build local and inclusive economies throughout their work, and to lean into the anchor movement while meeting the current moment.

"How can we stand by our communities when they need us most?" he asked, and answers were abundant in the conversations that followed.



"HAN convenings are like a revival, not a conference. We invest in communities and in people so that all can thrive."

-Dr. Thea James, Vice President of Mission and Associate Chief Medical Officer at Boston Medical Center

IMMERSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The neighborhoods of Greater Boston replaced the convening conference rooms for a series of immersive learning experiences that demonstrated the resilience of communities and showcased anchor strategies in action.



DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE (DSNI)

Community Ownership with DSNI

Participants joined a walking tour highlighting one of the nation's oldest Community Land Trusts and heard from multi-generational leaders addressing housing, food sovereignty, and neighborhood planning. The experience concluded with a visit to cooperative-owned City Fresh Foods and a conversation with the owners about food justice and community-based economic development.

LA COLABORATIVA

Rooted Power, Resilient People

Attendees toured the Chelsea Survival Center, a vibrant community hub developed with Mass General Brigham that houses a commercial kitchen, employment center, and food pantry—all designed to boost economic mobility and public health for Latinx and immigrant residents. The visit concluded with a powerful panel discussion featuring local leaders and community members who are conducting this transformative work.

NUBIAN SQUARE RISING

Culture, Care, and Collective Power in Action

Visitors to Roxbury explored the dynamic anchor initiatives reshaping the square's identity and impact as a vibrant cultural and economic hub once marked by disinvestment. Hosted by Nubian

Markets, this immersive experience offered attendees the opportunity to hear directly from local business leaders driving equitable revitalization in the neighborhood.

JACKSON SQUARE

Reclaiming Space, Defining Futures

Participants traveled by MBTA to experience firsthand the transformation of a corridor once marked by displacement into a dynamic bridge between Jamaica Plain and Roxbury. Hosted by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDNC), the visit included a tour of the Family Food Connections facility, showcasing community-led solutions to food insecurity and economic inequity. Attendees witnessed the impact of decades-long organizing and collaboration that is a blueprint for community-led redevelopment.

THE WORKING CITIES CHALLENGE

Community-Powered Change in Fitchburg and Chelsea

The Working Cities Challenge, launched by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, invited smaller post-industrial cities across Massachusetts to tackle local challenges through cross-sector collaboration, bold leadership, and deep community engagement. This immersive learning experience was hosted by La Colaborativa in Chelsea and included a guided tour of their facilities to see their transformative work in action. The session highlighted the integration of partners from both Chelsea and Fitchburg, showcasing how the Working Cities Challenge catalyzed trust, innovation, and belonging from the ground up. Together, participants explored how place-based collaboration and shared leadership have led to thriving communities and equitable local economies.

ROOTING ANCHOR STRATEGY

Conversations spanned systems change, legal strategy and partnership, rural implementation, and regional economic resilience. The theme that cut across them all: the anchor mission is not a project. It is a strategic lever and requires structural integration.

To be successful, anchor strategies must be fully embedded in an organization's ethos, governance, and operations. Identifying and developing internal champions is essential, but champions alone are not enough. This work must be resourced, accountable, and organization-wide.

Community co-design and early partnership are essential

Anchor strategies are strongest when they are built with community, not for community. Speakers emphasized engaging early and often—hosting community design days, creating partnership forums, and collaborating with residents to shape solutions and build shared ownership.

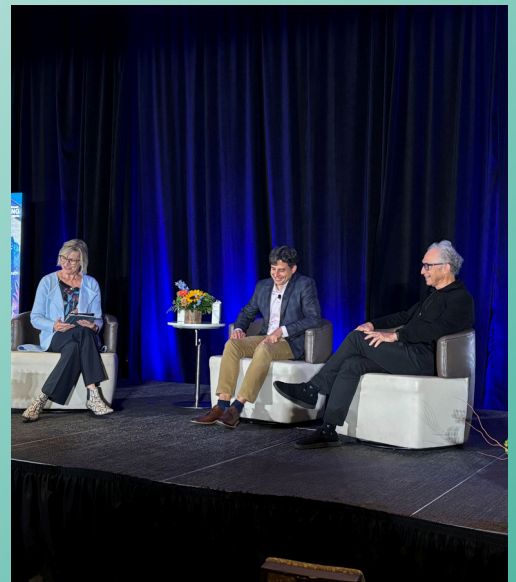
Avoid over-compliance—stay mission-aligned and principled in language and practices

1) Bringing legal in early in design as a strategic co-architect reduces risk, accelerates implementation, and builds board confidence.

2) Stay mission-aligned, not risk-paralyzed. Don't retreat from accurate language—use clear, mission-aligned explanations backed by data and First Amendment protections to remain grounded.

3) Operationalize equity by place. Use governance, policies, and scenario plans (including community-facing situations) to focus efforts where inequities are most concentrated and measure outcomes over time.

Healthcare delivery happens minute by minute and day by day; the anchor mission is generational. It requires courage, discipline, and staying rooted in place. As this convening made clear, our movement is gaining momentum and we are building it together.



IMPACT WORKFORCE

Sessions focused on collaboration with clinical and community partners, developing career pathways for youth through strategies such as earn and learn programs, and building intentional outside-in pathways.



One attendee shared: It's important to not base strategies off of assumptions, and instead form them from the truths of our communities.

Tap into intentionality and creativity

Speakers explored designing impact workforce programs and finding new ways to communicate the impact of such programs in a challenging legal and political environment—for example, by emphasizing the connection between the anchor mission and innovation, retention, and health access.

Design programs to help employees overcome economic insecurity

Attendees heard how human-centered design can lead to better programs, as does taking steps to troubleshoot program participants' barriers to success. One speaker shared an example of an apprentice who had difficulty completing online learning because they were living in their car, but was ultimately able to use onsite internet and study space with the support of their manager.

Build talent to meet future workforce needs

One speaker shared: "We are not in a 'nice to do' space anymore, we're in a 'must do' space. These 19-year-olds are going to be our workforce. They need family-sustaining wages. Our hope is that students will, with the support of career navigators, go to us right after graduation, or go to school and come to us after that. How can we as an employer support students [on that journey]?"



IMPACT PURCHASING

The track explored topics including mentorship, reaching key audiences, hyper-local food procurement, and more.

Build a successful Supplier Mentorship Program

Focus your supplier mentorship program on capacity building and investments in high-impact businesses, as this will promote their long term growth and sustainability in your organization. Address the challenges suppliers face with accessing bidding opportunities. Manage supplier expectations during the mentorship process to enhance resilience in fluctuating markets. Measure and communicate the program's impact.

Engage internal and external stakeholders

Be innovative: Think of creative ways to increase visibility and access to local suppliers, both within and outside your organization. Community partnerships and external collaborations are key to strengthening supplier access and inclusion, while internal change management is essential for building momentum for your Impact Purchasing program. Getting everyone involved and engaged will improve the program's effectiveness and overall impact.

Deepen the Impact Purchasing Commitment

HAN member health systems are already doing the work to support their community initiatives, so the goal is to move towards being more intentional and strategic. To do that, stakeholder and leadership engagement must be an ongoing activity, and managing the data requires internal and external support.

As a member shared: These Impact Purchasing programs are counter-measures to longstanding issues. It goes beyond being a good thing to do. It goes beyond the bottom line, and contributes to community wealth building.



PLACE-BASED INVESTING



Sessions covered place-based investing fundamentals, key learnings from network leaders, high-impact community partnerships, and investable models for shifting power and building community wealth.



Community partners are essential to success

Partnerships, specifically with other anchor institutions, impact investors, and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), are critical for uncovering high-impact opportunities.

Place-based investing is a long-term commitment

Meaningful outcomes will take time, and communicating impact is both an opportunity and at times a challenge as results don't always align with traditional ROI timelines. To account for this, health systems must communicate clearly and consistently about impact, describing such investments as commitments that go above and beyond their community benefit obligations.

Place-based investors provide critical capital

Community Land Trusts, Mixed Income Housing Trusts, Food and Housing Co-ops, Housing Preservation Funds, microfinancing for rural farmers, and community-based grocery stores show the breadth of organizations creating strong community impact alongside modest financial returns.

"Achieving improved community health is long-term and not transactional, but about building relationships,"

Nick Fritz, Director, Place-based Investing, Intermountain Health.



A RESILIENT ANCHOR MISSION MOVEMENT

This year's HAN Convening was sold out with many HAN members sharing that it was the best one yet! One member shared that when she attended the first HAN Convening she really felt at home, and that the experience was a catalyst for their anchor mission community collaboration. Participants told us that despite the current challenges, they left the Convening more inspired to further the movement towards rooted anchor strategies and health equity!



If you attended the Convening, give us your feedback by scanning this QR code or completing this [short survey](#).



Thank you

HAN is very grateful to our HAN Annual Convening 2025 sponsors for all the encouragement, support, and brilliance they put in to make the experience so wonderful!

Boston Children's Hospital, Boston Medical Center, UMass Memorial Health, Mass General Brigham, Beth Israel Lahey Health, Dartmouth Health, The Boston Foundation, Barr Foundation, and Wagner Foundation

See you in Denver for our next HAN Convening, October 14-16, 2026!