HEALTHCARE ANCHOR NETWORK

Denver 2026

Collective Strength. Local Action.

SUSTAINING OUR MOMENTUM.

Healthcare Anchor Network CONVENING 2026 | DENVER







Convening Highlights

Plenaries

52 health systems and 300 individuals took action in Denver!
The plenaries focused on community collaboration and deep partnerships for impact.

OPENING PLENARY: WHERE MOMENTUM MEETS COMMUNITY

The Opening Plenary set the tone for Collective Strength. Local Action. with a conversation that challenged attendees to move beyond helping communities endure inequity and toward changing the systems that perpetuate it. In conversation with *HAN President and Founder* **David Zuckerman**, **Dr. Matthew Desmond**, *Princeton professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Evicted and Poverty, by America*, and **Dr. Karen McNeil-Miller**, *President and CEO of The Colorado Health Foundation*, explored what it takes to turn momentum into meaningful, lasting progress. Their discussion pushed beyond temporary interventions toward systemic change, underscoring that solutions cannot simply be delivered to communities but must be shaped with them—grounded in trust, lived experience, and the recognition that communities are essential partners in advancing equitable health outcomes.





COMMUNITY PARTNER PLENARY: FROM LOCAL INVESTMENT TO LASTING IMPACT

Building on the morning's ILEs, **Yessica Holguin,** *Executive Director of the Center for Community Wealth,* moderated a conversation with **Jess Church** of *CommonSpirit Health*, **Ismael Guerrero** of *Mercy Housing*, **Stefka Fanchi** of *Elevation Community Land Trust,* and **Jason Janz** of *CrossPurpose*. Together, they explored how community capital, affordable homeownership, local food systems and workforce development intersect, challenging anchor institutions to look beyond writing a check and leverage their social capital, purchasing power, real estate, and influence as long-term community partners.

"This is a time to push ourselves to leverage our assets in new bold and creative ways."

- David Zuckerman
President & Founder
Healthcare Anchor Network

Impact Workforce

> *"If you can find one rung on the ladder into a mental health career that is broken, and you can fix it, then you can have an incredible transformational impact."*
> ***- Racheal Meiers***
> *Kaiser Permanente*

The Impact Workforce track explored how health systems can strengthen their workforce while advancing equity and improving outcomes for their communities. To that end, HAN announced recruitment for a second **WorkAdvance cohort,** providing funding and technical assistance over a 2-year period to implement impact workforce strategies.

IT'S OKAY TO START SMALL

"Don't underestimate the power of one," said Shelly Martin of OSU. Building partnerships and programs is complex, so start small.

DEVELOP INTERNAL PARTNERS AND CULTIVATE CHAMPIONS AT ALL LEVELS

Impact workforce programs require cross-functional collaboration and strong partnerships to operate as unified programs rather than fragmented efforts. Leadership champions are also essential to advocate for these programs during budget planning.

ELEVATE THE VOICES OF ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES

Marcus Paca shared how Northwell Health uses Human Centered Design to train supervisors and foster a culture to welcome nontraditional candidates, empowering those affected by workplace challenges to help solve them.



IDENTIFY INTERVENTION POINTS WHERE CAREER PATHWAYS BREAK DOWN

In the Behavioral Health session, speakers noted that more than half of mental health master's degree graduates face financial, time, and regulatory barriers to licensure. Kaiser Permanente and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing are working to reduce these barriers and expand access to clinical roles. In the AI and Internal Mobility session, Michael Jones shared how low employee survey scores on "I know how to move forward in the organization" led to UCSF's AI-enabled Talent Marketplace, connecting employees with mentorship and career development opportunities.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE

Partner with trusted community organizations to recruit and prepare candidates, and tap into the HAN community for peer support.

Place-Based Investing



> ***"If communities say that housing is the biggest issue, we have to listen."***
>
> ***- Ryane Jackson***
>
> *Memorial Hermann Health System*

This Place-based Investing track brought together experienced practitioners demonstrating how cross-sector collaborations can drive meaningful progress in affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, and community wealth-building.

BEYOND THE TRANSACTION: CO-INVESTING WITH BANKS AND FOUNDATIONS FOR UPWARD ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Intermountain Health, with partners Colorado Health Foundation and Zions Bank, demonstrated how place-based investments can generate measurable economic benefits and improve financial stability for individuals, families, and communities.

MEASURING THE SOCIAL RETURN ON IMPACT INVESTING

The American Medical Association and Kearney released new research measuring West Side United's social return on impact investing: every $1 invested was associated with approximately $4.40 to $8.60 in estimated annual social value. The report shows the community-level effects of collective impact investment.

INTERGENERATIONAL INVESTMENT IN ACTION: A CASE STUDY

Attendees celebrated new HAN member investments in My Connect Community, a member of the Purpose Built Communities network, and explored how partners came together to bring an intergenerational community asset to life.

Impact Purchasing



This series of Impact Purchasing sessions demonstrated how healthcare anchor institution supply chains can advance equity and community wealth building beyond traditional transactions through collaboration and partnership.

FROM MAP TO MOMENTUM: BUILDING YOUR STAKEHOLDER STRATEGY
Participants learned how to engage stakeholders across the supply chain—including clinical services teams, public health practitioners, business unit contracting decision makers, and other key leaders—to cross functionally advance local procurement efforts.

STRONGER TOGETHER: HOW LAUNDRY AND ANCHOR COLLABORATIVES CREATE ECONOMIC IMPACT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
Presenters shared a practical framework for aligning place-based impact procurement initiatives with strategic partnerships, resource sharing, local investment, and hiring strategies to improve the health and wealth of the communities served while strengthening supply chain operations.

> ***"While we are a relatively small health system, we are proud to be a signatory to all three of the HAN leadership commitments, including IPC 2030. Every new employee learns about this and our role with HAN at orientation."***
>
> ***- Michael Robinson***
> *Hawai'i Pacific Health*

CAPITAL ACCESS AND LOCAL FOOD COLLABORATIVE: TOOLS FOR CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
Speakers explored how collaborative food purchasing models can strengthen local business ecosystems and create healthier communities. Attendees learned lessons from Hawai'i Pacific Health and Kamehameha School's collaborative food model and tools for starting similar local food collaboration efforts.

TABLE TALK: THE LOCAL PROCUREMENT CHALLENGE
Through peer discussion, attendees examined real-world barriers to advancing local procurement and identified strategies to overcome them. Topics included integrating local purchasing into institutional buying, strengthening local purchasing programs, and embedding local procurement practices into supply chains.

Sustaining Anchor Strategies



> ***"We need to design systems to get better outcomes for healthier communities."***
>
> ***- Megan Sandel***
>
> *Boston Medical Center*

This year's convening focused on moving anchor strategies from road maps to sustained practice by strengthening internal alignment, integrating the work into core operations, and extending its impact beyond the health system. Members engaged with the new **Anchor Strategy Discovery Tool** to assess progress, engage colleagues, and build alignment.

EMBED STRATEGY ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Anchor strategies gain momentum when they extend beyond a dedicated team or initiative and become part of core functions, priorities, and decision-making.

CONNECT CORE OPERATIONS TO COMMUNITY IMPACT

Members explored how aligning Community Benefit, patient access, and revenue cycle functions can improve patient financial outcomes, address medical debt, and strengthen financial assistance.

EXTEND INFLUENCE THROUGH POLICY ADVOCACY

Health systems can extend their influence beyond their own walls. Building capacity for policy engagement on SDOH or upstream issues, incorporating community voices, and connecting anchor priorities to state policy discussions can help address the conditions that shape health and economic opportunity. HAN announced a new cohort with this focus for 2027.

SUSTAIN MOMENTUM THROUGH LEARNING AND ADAPTATION

Progress is rarely linear. Competing priorities, leadership changes, and evolving circumstances often require recalibration. Peer learning, practical tools, and shared problem-solving can help organizations navigate challenges, adapt their approaches, and sustain progress.

Immersive Learning Experiences

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH. LOCAL ACTION. — EXPERIENCED IN COMMUNITY

Immersive Learning Experiences are an essential part of the HAN Convening because some things cannot be fully understood from a ballroom. Across Denver, five ILEs placed attendees inside the communities, partnerships, and investments advancing health equity—making *Collective Strength. Local Action.* something they could see, experience, and interrogate for themselves.



FRESHLO HUB | COMMUNITY POWER MADE VISIBLE

FreshLo was a manifestation of collective strength. What began with Montbello residents advocating for the resources their community deserved has grown into an interconnected hub for housing, behavioral health and wellness, fresh food access, arts and education, community gathering and entrepreneurship. Attendees moved through the spaces before hearing directly from community organizers, a FreshLo resident, philanthropy, and WellPower about community ownership, collaboration, and what it takes to move beyond responding to poor health outcomes to actually creating the conditions for health.



MERCY HOUSING | CULTURE, HOUSING, AND HEALTH UNDER ONE ROOF

Crane's Landing demonstrated what becomes possible when development begins with the people it intends to serve. Created through community and investment partnerships, the project centers American Indian and Alaska Native heritage and community voice through culturally relevant healthcare, trauma-informed housing design, and resident services. Touring the residences and Denver Indian Health and Family Services made the connection unmistakable: housing can be more than shelter, and healthcare can be more than clinical care when culture, dignity, and belonging are built in the design.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS | FOLLOWING THE INVESTMENT FROM HEALTH TO HOME

This ILE explored place-based investment across two very different settings. The morning began inside **Kaiser Permanente's Lakewood Medical Offices**, where attendees discussed Kaiser's role as an anchor institution, Community Solutions' innovative real estate and financing work, and Housing Connector's focus on housing stability. The group then traveled to **The Loop at Lamar Station Apartments** to see these ideas translated into place—touring residences, resident services, and green space. Together, the two stops connected healthcare, capital, housing stability and the partnerships required to build healthier communities.

Immersive Learning Experiences



CROSSPURPOSE | PERSPECTIVE BEFORE POLICY

CrossPurpose challenged attendees to experience economic mobility from a different perspective. Through the 75-minute **COPE (Cost of Poverty Experience) simulation,** participants navigated limited resources, competing responsibilities, and difficult decisions—offering a glimpse into circumstances that are too often discussed only through data and policy. A debrief and conversation with **CrossPurpose** and **Intermountain Health** connected the experience back to workforce development and economic mobility, highlighting how a deeper understanding of barriers can change the way we design solutions.



ADVANCING FOOD EQUITY | FOOD ACCESS IS AN ECOSYSTEM

Across the **National Western Center** and **CSU Spur Campus**, food equity emerged as far more than access to healthy food. **CSU Spur Terra** connected research and controlled-environment agriculture to regional and cultural accountability. **The GrowHaus** demonstrated community-led food access at scale—serving thousands of neighbors while connecting *Food is Medicine*, nutrition education, *SNAP* enrollment and economic opportunity. At Huerta Urbana, **Farmbox** showcased vertical hydroponic farming that produces fresh, culturally relevant food in a neighborhood with limited access. Together, the stops revealed food equity as an intersection of health, culture, technology, economic opportunity, and community power.

LOCAL ACTION TASTED LIKE DENVER!

New this year, **Taste of Denver** extended the ILE philosophy to the way HAN itself showed up in community. Instead of treating meals as simply an event necessity, each experience created an opportunity to direct Convening dollars toward local entrepreneurs: **Momma Jah's** brought plant-based Caribbean and Southern soul food; **Tocabe** connected Indigenous foodways and Native producers to its Food is Medicine work; **Alvarez Desserts** offered healthier, alternative-flour desserts; **Meats & Sweets** shared its family-rooted, made-from-scratch approach; and **La Catrina Grill** brought the culinary heritage of Mexico City-born chef Silvia Hernandez.

It was a small but intentional extension of the larger lesson of the morning: local action also means local investment. Taken together, the ILEs showed health equity in its fullest form—housing and healthcare, food and workforce, culture and belonging, capital and community power. They also gave attendees a shared point of reference to carry back into the Convening and directly into the **Community Partner Plenary** that followed. **The ILEs aren't an escape from the Convening; they're where the Convening meets the community—and where Collective Strength becomes Local Action.**



Celebrating Collective Strength

Over three days, 300+ individuals representing 52 health systems and many community partners came together to exchange ideas, share insights, and inspire action. HAN is proud of what this community continues to accomplish together!



> ***"Leaving the convening, my commitment is renewed to really meeting my community's health needs. When the easy answer is 'no' because of institutional and political barriers, my response is 'yes.'"***
>
> ***- Megan Timm***
>
> *SSM Health*

Thank you presenting sponsors!

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Join us next year Oct. 13-15!

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