



# *healthier. together.*

**SUMMER 2018** a report on what we've done  
and where we're going, **together**

 **North Sound ACH**

Building Healthier Communities in Island, San Juan,  
Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom Counties

## a message from the executive director

### *working. together.*

Nature and its grandeur surrounds the North Sound ACH region, and we have an unprecedented opportunity to improve health and well-being for the people who live here, especially if we capitalize on the strengths of being on this journey together.

There are challenges that keep some from reaching full potential - health, education, housing, employment and others. It is only when we see that our journeys depend on each other's success, that we can begin to understand the need to invest in one another's efforts, projects and futures.

Partners in the North Sound ACH region have a long history of working on joint projects - public health, roads, fire and safety are just a few examples. The eight tribes - Stillaguamish, Samish, Nooksack, Lummi, Tulalip, Upper Skagit, Swinomish,

and Sauk-Suiattle - also have a long history of collaboration and caring for each other across their traditional tribal nation boundaries.

The waters of the Salish Sea are an integral part of this rich history.

The North Sound ACH convenes a table that encourages collaboration to craft strategies and solutions that serve us all. It is a very special place to work and live.

Our vision - creating healthier communities in Island, San Juan, Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties - will require that we lean in together to do the work. Join us in clearing the path to that vision.

*In partnership,  
Liz Baxter, Executive Director*

*"We are here to awaken from an illusion of separateness."  
Thich Nhat Hanh*

### Plan



Assess community needs, bring partners together, form collaborative entity to take on projects like the Medicaid Transformation Project.

### Act



Gather data, formalize contracts with partners, finalize the implementation plan, and launch initiatives around care coordination, integration, transformation, and foundational capacity building.

# what we've accomplished

## a core infrastructure

The North Sound ACH started in 2014, when regional leaders in health care, community services, philanthropy, government, and education crafted a shared agenda for health innovation in the North Sound region. The Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement (WAHA) acted as the “backbone” organization, until the North Sound ACH was incorporated as an independent nonprofit in mid-2016.

The North Sound was the first region in Washington to be formally designated as an Accountable Community of Health, with a Governing Body made up of community leaders which, at times, had as many as 35 participants.

In 2017, the Board of Directors expanded to include a Community Leadership Council and Tribal Alignment Committee, and hired its first Executive Director, who formed a core team to begin working with partners across the region.

## key partners

Close to forty partners came together to recommend approaches to the Medicaid Transformation Project. Organizations from five counties, health settings, law enforcement, first responders, tribal partners and community based organizations took part in workgroups, leading to delivery of our Project Plan.

## an early win for healthy families

In 2016, the North Sound ACH launched an initiative focused on training providers about Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) with a longer term goal to improve maternal health by increasing access to information and resources to support intended (versus unintended) pregnancy. This “early win” project was funded through a State Innovation Models (SIM) federal grant, support from Group Health Cooperative’s community foundation, and several individual private donations. The trainings were well-attended and well-received, and demonstrated the work we can achieve through collaboration.

*“It will take radical imagination to solve our most critical problems. Radical imagination means thinking big, demanding better, and redefining the terms of the struggle to get there.”*

*Angela Glover Blackwell*

## Scale and Sustain



Monitor and evaluate, growing what works and changing or stopping what doesn't. Scale up projects to reach more communities, and create sustainability plans for successful initiatives.



## Accountability

The North Sound ACH is accountable to the people and leadership of the North Sound region. Board meetings are open to the public, and each meeting includes opportunities for the public to give input on strategies and decisions.

# WHO IS THE North Sound Accountable Community of Health?

A core team working with partner organizations and coalitions in Island, San Juan, Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Initially focusing on initiatives for those experiencing:

## clinical partners:

- Health care systems, clinics and hospitals
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- School-based health centers
- Behavioral health & substance abuse providers
- Oral Health providers

## community-based partners:

- Transportation
- Housing
- Educational Institutions
- Government agencies
- Social service organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Food and nutrition support

## tribal nations

- Lummi Nation
- Nooksack Tribe
- Samish Nation
- Sauk-Suiattle Tribe
- Stillaguamish Tribe
- Swinomish Tribe
- Tulalip Tribes
- Upper Skagit Tribe

- Co-occurring disorders/conditions (Behavioral Health, Substance Use Disorder, Physical Health)
- Serious mental illness
- Substance abuse, including opioid abuse
- Pregnancy
- Access, care, and utilization disparities

*Our region will thrive when we work in partnership and take care of each other. We are, as Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “tied together in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly.”*  
*Liz Baxter*

## planning delivery system transformation

The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) through the federally approved Medicaid Transformation Project, identified a significant set of resources for the nine ACHs statewide to coordinate and allocate. The North Sound ACH region is second only to King County in the number of Medicaid lives, so our work is critically important to the state’s success.

Representatives from across the region recommended evidence-based strategies to improve health and meet the performance goals laid out by the HCA. Key strategies centered around initiatives in behavioral and physical health integration, care coordination, the opioid crisis, reproductive and maternal child health, access to oral health, and chronic disease.

## We have made commitments to:



- work with public and private sector partners
- create innovative and community-led solutions
- advance equity
- embed the perspective of clients, patients and community members
- look for solutions that include and go beyond traditional health care
- use ACH funds to leverage other opportunities in the region
- operate in a lean, efficient manner
- be accountable and transparent

Strategies from eight workgroups were incorporated into the North Sound ACH Project Plan, approved by HCA in January 2018. We next craft a detailed Implementation Plan, due to HCA in Fall 2018. We will implement these strategies with partners across our region who want to truly transform the care and services provided to individuals and families.

# our vision for the years to come

## addressing health equity

In order to improve health equity, we are looking downstream, midstream, and upstream for opportunities that make a difference in the lives of people in the North Sound region. That will include leaning into tough conversations about class, privilege, and race. The North Sound will offer a number of trainings to ensure our team, leaders, and partners are prepared to put equity into action.

## learning from partners and building on current work

The North Sound ACH considers ongoing partner engagement as key to project implementation success and necessary for leveraging community resources. Our goal is to find innovation that is working, replicate it where we can, grow it when possible, and implement new strategies where needed. The North Sound ACH will:

- Identify what works, what doesn't, and then build upon regional successes.
- Seek ways for the North Sound ACH's resources to assist providers in being more successful. We won't "reinvent the wheel," but instead, will equip providers with tools and resources to increase their effectiveness in the work they are already doing.

## a seat at the table

Our core premise is that cross-sector collaboration is essential to understanding the overlapping impact and opportunities of system transformation. The North Sound ACH will continue to convene partners in ways that foster shared learning, increase opportunities for innovation that result in better care, stronger health outcomes, at a cost the system can afford.

## looking forward

In 2018 we submit our implementation plan to the HCA. We will bring experts to spark ideas and creativity, focused on tangible tools and processes, with the core work led by partners in the North Sound region.

Next year (2019) we begin implementing initiatives, learning and refining, seeing what can be standardized and what needs to be unique to our region and communities.

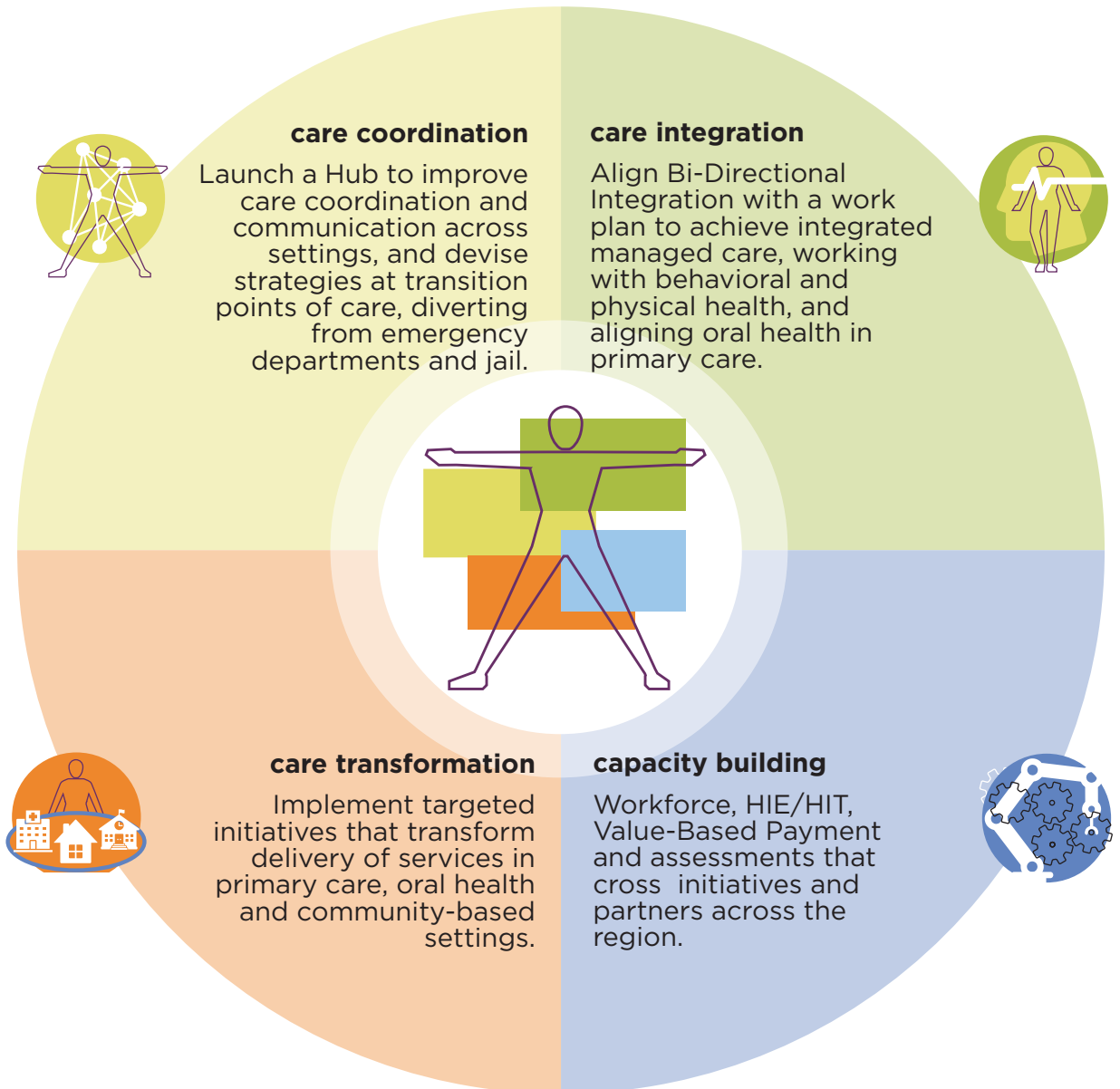
All along we will be reporting progress to the HCA, earning revenue as we hit defined benchmarks, and to our Board and partners in the region.

*“Even as we think of health equity as the outcome, we know that health and well-being are nurtured, protected and preserved where people live, learn, work and play.”*

*Jim Marks, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

# health: viewing the whole person

*The North Sound ACH organized initiatives into four areas, recognizing that they blend into one another, and at the core is the person receiving care and services.*



join  
us



## WAYS TO GET ENGAGED

**1 Online:**  
Visit our website at [NorthSoundACH.org](http://NorthSoundACH.org). Sign up for our newsletter, check out the blog, or follow us on Facebook.

**2 In person:**  
Attend a training or community meeting, or invite us to join you where you are!

**3 Partner:**  
Do you work with people on Medicaid in the North Sound region? Reach out to learn more about partnership opportunities.

### North Sound Accountable Community of Health

Building Healthier Communities  
in Island, San Juan, Snohomish,  
Skagit and Whatcom Counties

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# North Sound ACH 2018

## Board of Directors

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Skagit County

Anne Deacon, Whatcom  
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of Upper Skagit Tribe

John Stephens, didgwálic  
Wellness Center

Jim Steinruck, Tulalip Health  
System

Joe Valentine, North Sound  
BHO (past Chair)

Bill Watson, Council Member,  
San Juan County

Kim Williams, Providence  
Health and Services  
(Secretary)

Greg Winter, Opportunity  
Council

Open seat, Nooksack Tribe

Open seat, Sauk-Suiattle Tribe

All meetings of the North Sound  
ACH Board meeting are open to the  
public and include opportunities  
for non-board members to speak to  
the Board. You can find the meeting  
dates and locations at [www.  
NorthSoundACH.org/events](http://www.NorthSoundACH.org/events).

You can also send email messages  
to the Board by emailing [Board@  
NorthSoundACH.org](mailto:Board@NorthSoundACH.org).