



How to use the 2024 Environmental Scan

The 2024 Environmental Scan can help hospitals and other stakeholders strategize and think about key issues and trends with staff, leaders and boards. Here are some ways you can use the Environmental Scan and other AHA resources to plan for today and tomorrow.



Scan the QR code to download the Environmental Scan.

Increase engagement with key stakeholders and the community

- **Spark discussion:** Share with your board and staff at meetings and retreats. Ask: What two or three pieces of information in the Environmental Scan most concern or surprise you? What are the implications for our patients, community and organization? If you were reinventing the health care system from scratch, what kind of system would you create to respond to these issues?
- **Tell your story:** Use the information to tell your story to the community you serve. Identify vehicles for these communications, such as presentations, reports, op-eds and material you share with legislators and funders. Post relevant information to your website and link to the complete Environmental Scan at aha.org/environmentalscan.

Leadership Discussion Guide: Probing questions to inform your strategy

- **Shift your strategy:** How have the lessons you have learned during the pandemic changed your outlook and strategies? Talk with your strategy team about the implications on your strategic plan, partnerships and business development strategy. What are the challenges and opportunities you have identified during this demanding time?
- **Review your business model:** Reexamine the value proposition you offer to your community. Do you need to adjust it based on the changing environment and market trends? How are you incorporating consumer-centric strategies into your plans? Are you evaluating alternative sites of care beyond the hospital, including telehealth? Are you reassessing your approach to value-based care? How can you improve your operational structure?
- **Workforce:** How can you support the health and well-being of your workforce through resources, education and structural changes? What short-term and long-term strategies can address both clinical and non-clinical workforce capacity? What care models and technology can help to redesign care delivery to support the workforce? What new leadership skills are needed?
- **Use data and technology:** Are you using data to inform your decision-making? How can technology improve operations, clinical outcomes and the patient experience? How can technology allow your workforce to spend more time with patients? What new opportunities and risks do AI-enabled systems present? What new tech-focused competencies do your leaders and teams need? What cybersecurity precautions do you need to institute or strengthen?
- **Communication:** How are you communicating your plans with staff, patients and the community? Determine your key messages and a multichannel communication strategy for your stakeholders. Share challenges, success stories and positive outcomes.
- **Envision an optimal future:** Think about the larger societal inequities, health care disparities and cultural shifts that the pandemic has brought into focus. What role can your organization play to implement solutions that can make a genuine difference? What community partnerships can you explore or expand?

- **Examine innovation efforts:** Talk with your chief innovation officer and chief financial officer about the implications for your investment in innovation and the prioritization of innovation projects. Consider building a sustainable, agile innovation infrastructure that's well-supported by budget, talent and processes.
- **Continue scanning:** The AHA provides regular market intelligence updates through the weekly [Market Scan e-newsletter](#) and a daily roundup of news and resources through [AHA Today](#). Additionally, explore key issues through the Society for Health Care Strategy & Market Development's [Futurescan](#).

Preparing for the future: The intersection of public health and clinical care



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The myriad of data points and trend insights in the [2024 Environmental Scan](#) can serve to guide hospitals and health systems to close gaps in care delivery that were identified during the past three years. The AHA is laser-focused on applying the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve the entire health care ecosystem.

One aspect where we can make meaningful progress involves how we work with our public health colleagues. We know there were

gaps in the desired intersections during this challenging time. The areas in which we can focus as we plan for the future include strategic partnerships, data capabilities and sharing, communication and role clarification.

Cross-sector partnerships at the national, regional and local levels can yield value to the work that hospitals do every day and can provide even more value in times of crisis when coordination is critical. Through the [Partnership for Public Health](#), the AHA worked with other key stakeholders to create a set of resources that showcase leading strategies for active collaboration. To ensure that these partnerships focus on priority issues, the AHA's [Community Health Assessment Toolkit](#) can yield a shared understanding of a community's assets and needs.

Additionally, the AHA convened a consortium of national public health and health care organizations. This group highlighted partnerships that have been

successful in mitigating the effects of disasters and produced the [AHA Field Guide for Emergency Preparedness](#). The guide provides a set of aligned priorities and strategies that health care, public health, fire departments and emergency management can implement together. It offers tangible ways to:

- Strengthen cross-sector partnerships.
- Build workforce capacity and resilience.
- Share information and manage misinformation.
- Normalize a culture of preparedness.

In addition to this important work, the AHA has joined the [Common Health Coalition](#) to improve the connectivity between public health and the health care field. Together with Kaiser Permanente, the American Medical Association, America's Health Insurance Plans and the Alliance of Community Health Plans, we are pursuing pragmatic actions to:

- Coordinate efforts between public health (e.g., CDC) and our clinical care delivery providers with clear communication of goals, roles, responsibilities and deliverables.
- Build scalable emergency preparedness programs.
- Establish national standards for stratifying data.
- Modernize the infectious disease surveillance system.

Trust, the foundation of these relationships, takes time, honest communication and a commitment to shared goals. As health care leaders take stock of their own relationships with public health and community organizations, these AHA resources can spark discussion, clarity, cooperation and action.