

Anchor Mission Playbook

New Learnings and Findings
in Anchor Mission Execution

prepared by

Rush University System for Health

with support from

Healthcare Anchor Network



1 Introduction and Playbook Purpose

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Introduction



David A. Ansell, MD, MPH

Senior Vice President for [Community Health Equity for Rush University Medical Center](#)

Everyone deserves the [chance to be healthy](#), and the multi-year life expectancy gap on Chicago’s West Side communities when compared to affluent ones is a painful reminder of how much work we must do. Fueled by the ideal that everyone deserves better, I am proud to lead Rush’s community health and economic vitality strategy.

Through my observations as a physician, I have witnessed the real-life impacts of health injustice on my patients and their communities. Serving patients who lacked access to food, housing, medical insurance, and more meant that their health problems were compounded. I saw first-hand the limitations of traditional medicine and knew we needed to address the social and structural causes of poor health like structural racism and poverty, and not just the symptoms.

Where you live should not determine how long you live. We can save lives by investing in communities as well as our patients. This is at the core of the Healthcare Anchor Mission Network – leveraging our collective human and economic capital by taking an active role in advancing inclusive community development. Hospitals as community pillars can help heal alongside doctors and nurses –raising the standard and improving health outcomes for everyone.

Since 2017, Rush’s anchor mission has evolved into a framework that helps concentrate the impact of how we hire, purchase, invest and engage in our communities. Through strategic partnerships such as [West Side United \(WSU\)](#) – a racial health equity collaborative – Rush has been able to structure organizational resources in innovative ways to best serve our local communities.

Rush, WSU, and community partners recently broke ground on the [Sankofa Wellness Village](#) – a community-driven initiative that will connect West Garfield Park residents of all ages to health, wellness, recreational, and financial opportunities. As an investor and anchor tenant, Rush will offer health programming, mental health services, workforce development programs and more to residents at no cost.

Rush has continued to drive investments on Chicago’s West Side. Rush became the first hospital system to contract with a new local laundry vendor, [Fillmore](#)

[Linen Service](#). Through this local investment, Rush is supporting dozens of new high-quality jobs and is expected to save hundreds of thousands of dollars annually – proving that community investment is good business.

As anchor mission work progresses, health systems need to adapt and create cross-departmental collaboration to ensure sustainability. That is why Rush is always looking to engage in workforce development initiatives like [Jumphire](#) – a cohort connecting underserved communities to quality jobs as supply chain technicians and purchasing buyers and the [Rush Education & Career Hub](#) – cradle-to-career pipeline programs putting under-represented youth on pathways to skilled jobs. These strategic investments mean that even though most hospital employees don't interact directly with patients, every Rush employee contributes to community health and revitalization through our purchasing, hiring, and investment practices.

Since the publication of the original anchor mission playbook in 2018, Rush has continued to deepen its commitment to anchor mission work across its system. As our work evolves, one aspect remains the same: we cannot do this alone. Rush is committed to sharing our experiences and learnings to advance anchor mission work across throughout Chicago, across the country, and beyond.



David Zuckerman

President & Founder, [Healthcare Anchor Network](#)

Rush University System for Health has been an important pioneer of the anchor mission movement. Adopting and implementing the anchor mission framework is an ethos, which needs to be embedded in the institution's values and integrated and aligned with its operations. HAN appreciates Rush's bold leadership to continue to manifest—as well as improve upon—its commitment to health equity and building the economies of its surrounding neighborhoods.

We hope Rush's story and advice are inspiring and practical for others in their own anchor mission journeys as they pull from Rush's experience and innovation. However, we know that institutions will inevitably proceed with their own journeys, contexts, creativity, and the lived experiences of their own communities and staff. HAN thanks and acknowledges Rush for its willingness to move forward with the anchor mission ideas and strategies without other examples to rely upon. Rush is truly an anchor mission pioneer, helping us to build the anchor mission movement.

Purpose of Playbook Updates

Over the past five years, the landscape for executing anchor mission strategies has drastically changed. The original [Anchor Mission Playbook](#) outlined strategies and insights to execute an anchor mission approach when the field was developing. Six years later, Rush University System for Health has derived new insights, learnings, implications, and tools to aid in the execution of the anchor mission framework beyond establishing support from executive leadership and developing a reporting cadence in support of anchor mission implementation. During that time and the years following, healthcare institutions were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the healthcare industry as a whole faced financial and organizational challenges that upended the traditional ways of delivering quality care.

In this update to Rush's original Anchor Mission Playbook, we outline new learnings, challenges, developments, and resources that have helped Rush University System for Health ensure the sustainability of its anchor mission in the current financial climate. The playbook was written for readers who possess a foundational understanding of anchor mission principles, and have read the original [Anchor Mission Playbook](#). It will be particularly informative for readers who are or will deeply be involved in anchor mission implementation at their institutions. Learn about [anchor mission strategies here](#).

This playbook was prepared by Rush University System for Health with support from the Healthcare Anchor Network (HAN).

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About the Healthcare Anchor Network

The [Healthcare Anchor Network \(HAN\)](#) catalyzes health systems to leverage individually and collectively their hiring, purchasing, investing and other key institutional assets to create economically and racially equitable local economies that sustain healthy communities.

HAN is a growing national collaboration of over 75 leading healthcare systems that together employ more than 2 million people, purchase over \$100 billion annually, and have over \$250 billion in investment assets. To contact Healthcare Anchor Network, email us at info@anchornetwork.org.

Rush's Anchor Mission

Rush University Medical Center is the largest non-governmental employer on Chicago's West Side and spends millions of dollars on goods and services each year. Our Anchor Mission Strategy outlines the ways in which we channel that economic power to improve the economic vitality of West Side neighborhoods and help residents achieve better health. We strive to address the causes of poor health, not simply treat the symptoms of disease.

The strategy, which incorporates the following four commitments, drives our efforts to concentrate the impact of how we hire, purchase, invest, and volunteer in the West Side communities we serve.

Hire Local

We are steadily increasing the number of new employees we hire from anchor mission neighborhoods by partnering with city-wide community-based organizations to align our hiring needs with job candidates and collaborate on training programs. We are also developing programs that help our current entry-level employees advance their careers within Rush.

Buy Local

We know that the Medical Center's purchasing power can catalyze economic development at the neighborhood level. Our purchasing managers are connecting with local vendors to increase the amount of goods and services we source directly from the West Side.

Invest Local

In partnership with local community development financial institutions, we have begun to invest capital in community-based organizations and projects that lack access to traditional lenders but have demonstrated the ability to create the wealth communities need — for example, affordable housing. These "impact investments" are not donations or grants; they are business loans that we expect will return a small profit and an even greater social impact.

RUSH Local

Rush employees and students have a strong commitment to volunteering and supporting community organizations each year. We launched an Employee Volunteer Program that allows them to volunteer during working hours, which will enable even more people to contribute to community-building work.

For further information about Rush's Anchor Mission, contact Nathalie Rosado Ortiz, System Manager, Anchor Mission and Community Engagement, Rush Office of Community Health Equity and Engagement, Nathalie_Rosado@rush.edu.

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