



NORTON COUNTY HOSPITAL

Strategic Progress Summary 2022-2024



Introduction

In 2018, Norton County Hospital, its partners, and community stakeholders worked to develop a strategic plan to guide future priorities and decision-making processes that would allow it to expand the scope of the hospital and better meet the needs of the surrounding community.

Beginning in 2020, the hospital has been tasked with adapting to the demands of responding to a global pandemic that has had a significant impact on healthcare staff and systems while continuing to care for the ongoing needs of those they serve across the region.

In 2021, Norton County Hospital conducted a community health needs assessment to drive the process of reviewing and updating the existing strategic plan and continue to make progress toward meeting its established goals in the four areas of Facility Status and Condition, Funding and Public Financial Support, Recruitment and Retention, and Regional Engagement and Needs. Hospital leadership met alongside community partners in February 2022 to discuss the status of each of these areas and to utilize the results of the needs assessment to identify opportunities for continued improvement.

This report includes a summary of progress made since the plan’s initial development in 2018 as well as strategies to guide future efforts.

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Community Health Needs Assessment 2021 (Executive Summary)

Wichita State University's Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE) was contracted by the Norton County Hospital to conduct a community assessment of Norton County on health and related issues. One hundred eighty-three (183) electronic and paper surveys were collected and analyzed for the assessment report. Additionally, a community forum was held following the compilation of a preliminary report of findings from the survey to allow an opportunity for community members to provide input regarding their reactions to the results. At the forum, CARE researchers presented the results and gathered feedback regarding what seemed accurate, what seemed inconsistent with participants' experiences/perceptions, and other comments that would be helpful to Norton County Hospital as it moves forward with its planning process. Complete results of the survey and community forum discussion are available by visiting: https://www.ntcohosp.com/our_story/community_health_needs.html.

Primary Health Concerns and Needs

- 1. Healthcare access and affordability are top concerns in Norton County, highlighted by desires for retention of providers and increased investment into the healthcare system.** Good access to healthcare was most important to respondents in creating a healthy community (68.6%). Affordable healthcare was most often listed in the top 3 needs for community health (62.4%).
- 2. Behavioral health is a concern in Norton County.** Respondents said that abusing illegal drugs (not prescriptions) is the behavior that most often contributes to health issues in the community (57.2%). Mental/behavioral health was the second most commonly identified condition that respondents believe has the greatest impact on their community's health (47.7%).
- 3. Support for policies that prohibit the use of commercial tobacco products in public spaces is high.** A majority of respondents support policies that prohibit the use of commercial tobacco products (e.g., cigarettes, chewing tobacco, vaping products) in all outdoor spaces that are open to the general public (e.g., parks, trails, sidewalks) (73.0%).
- 4. Healthy eating is a challenge in Norton County.** The highest percentage of respondents disagree that their community has sufficient options for healthy eating (33.6%).

5. **Options for physical activity could be improved.** While 57.9% of respondents indicated their community has sufficient options for physical activity, respondents said the top 3 resources that would allow them to be more physically active are walking/biking paths/trails, an activity center/additional community activities, and improved/expanded sidewalks.

6. **Cancer was perceived to have the greatest impact on community health.** Fifty-four percent (54.2%) of respondents put this in the top 3 greatest impacts on community health.

Strategic Focus Area 1

Facility Status and Condition

GOAL Norton County Hospital’s facility meets the emerging health care needs of the region (form follows function).

- OBJECTIVES**
- Increase community and partner support for assessing and addressing hospital facility needs.
 - Improve access to high-quality medical services.
 - Witness hospital capacity for state-of-art equipment and procedures.
 - Increase number of people utilizing services (market share).

- DASHBOARD MEASURES**
- Number of region-wide community meetings to identify health care needs
 - Unduplicated community member attendance at public engagement activities
 - Number of people utilizing services at the hospital (market share)
 - Public financial support for the hospital

HEALTH NEEDS 1. Healthcare access and affordability

STATUS UPDATES **Strategy 1.1: Share messages/facts about the current status of the hospital.**

Staff at Norton County Hospital continue to develop effective messages and strategies for communicating the story of the hospital’s past, present and future. The hospital has a positive presence online, and public feedback is improving as evidenced by positive reviews online. Services provided during the pandemic have highlighted the skills of current staff to manage acute care patients which produces opportunities to communicate these services and skills to the wider community.

The hospital had been conducting regular in-person meetings with staff and members of the community. However, these were suspended in March 2020 due to the State’s public health emergency. A quarterly CEO

newsletter column was established as a method to communicate with community stakeholders and hospital staff and this continues to be used along with social media posts and ongoing healthcare provider communication.

The hospital is currently implementing a new leadership framework based on the book *Hardwiring Excellence*. The framework includes strategies for improving staff morale and opportunities to develop and deliver consistent messaging among staff, patients, and their families that include highlighting the value of maintaining safe, quality facilities in the local community.

Strategy 1.2: Study feasibility of new building, expansion, repurposing, and other opportunities including co-location.

The hospital completed a financial feasibility assessment of current operations and options to meet regional needs in 2020. However, this will need to be updated to account for current market costs before physical changes are made. There is a recognition that the hospital will need to make investments in the updating and maintenance of current facilities while exploring additional options that support meeting the current and future needs of the community.

In the meantime, hospital leadership will continue to evaluate current space utilization to accommodate departmental and treatment area needs. They will also work to find ways to better communicate changes in procedures that have already been made to keep patient areas safe. For example, this could mean explaining the more efficient use of exam rooms and waiting spaces in the clinic that allow for better infection control but may outwardly give the appearance that the clinic is not busy.

Strategy 1.3: Explore existing and potential opportunities to negotiate partnerships that inform facility design, meet increased demands, and promote sustainability of the hospital.

Norton County Hospital has become a member of the Sunflower Health Network, which allows them to leverage resources that improve services. In addition to this membership, the hospital has a variety of agreements with healthcare systems in the region including CHI Health Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, NE; Citizens Medical Center in Colby, KS; Gove County Medical Center; Smith County Memorial Hospital; and Hays Medical Center to leverage both human and equipment resources.

1.1 Share messages/facts about the current status of the hospital.

[Timeline: February 2022- December 2024]

- 1.1.1 Prepare messages/facts that tell the story of the hospital's past, present, and future status.
- 1.1.2 Equip staff with talking points and message materials to informally share with the community.
- 1.1.3 Conduct staff and community communication and education activities (i.e., in-person meetings, social media, local billboards, internal and external newsletters).
- 1.1.4 Gather and utilize positive patient experience stories and health outcome data to communicate with internal and external stakeholders.

Champions: NCH CEO, NCH CFO, Foundation/Communications Director

1.2 Study feasibility of new building, expansion, repurposing, and other opportunities, including co-location.

[Timeline: February 2022- December 2024]

- 1.2.1 Assessment of regional healthcare needs and desires.
- 1.2.2 Analyze community utilization trends, including classification comparisons.
- 1.2.3 Study what is working in peer communities.
- 1.2.4 Conduct feasibility assessment of current operations and options to meet regional needs expressed by the community.
- 1.2.5 **[NEW] Review current space utilization across the facility and identify opportunities to make improvements.**

Champions: CEO, Engineering Manager, Rehabilitation Manager, NCH Board of Trustees

1.3 Explore existing and potential opportunities to negotiate partnerships that inform facility design, meet increased demands, and promote sustainability of the hospital.

[Timeline: February 2022- December 2024]

- 1.3.1 **[UPDATED] Identify and establish formal and informal partnerships to assure NCH is offering access to a continuum of services that meet community health needs.**

Champions: CEO, NCH Board of Trustees, Medical Staff Representative

Strategic Focus Area 2

Funding and Public Financial Support

GOAL Norton County Hospital has strong public financial support and other diversified resources to meet the needs of patients, the region, and hospital/clinic staff.

- OBJECTIVES**
- Use hospital resources effectively and efficiently.
 - Increase funding for personnel, services, and technology.
 - Increase perception of hospital stability to promote financial support.
 - Increase diversity of hospital funding sources.

- DASHBOARD MEASURES**
- Percent of income by source (including non-service generated income)
 - Profit-loss margins
 - Days of billing in accounts receivable status (billing and payment efficiency)
 - Increase in inpatient service utilization

- HEALTH NEEDS**
1. Healthcare access and affordability
 6. Cancer has the greatest impact on community health

STATUS UPDATES **Strategy 2.1: Increase regional funding support.**

Since the development of the strategic plan in 2018, NCH has been able to develop a variety of opportunities to increase financial support for hospital initiatives and services including funding from the Norton County Commission to purchase updated radiology equipment, increase the county Mill Levy support, as well as establishing an additional scholarship fund in the Norton Regional Health Foundation for individuals pursuing education in healthcare-related fields (outside of nursing).

Norton Regional Health Foundation developed a prioritization of fundraising opportunities based on the strategic plan and created a packet of information that can be used to communicate with potential donors. The Foundation has received recent bequests from former patients and hope to continue building relationships with the community that would expand this type of donation opportunity for others in the area. The

Foundation was also able to successfully acquire grant funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Pathways program to focus on community health and well-being efforts over four years.

Strategy 2.2: Promote a sustainable hospital environment.

Respondents to the Community Health Needs Assessment indicated a significant need to improve the hospital's billing processes. NCH leadership currently meets twice weekly to address these issues and has contracted with a billing company who is working to correct issues of accuracy and timeliness experienced with a previously contracted company. The hospital has also developed a patient financial assistance program to address issues related to affordable care.

NCH recently added three new physicians who are committed to caring for the local community and the long-term success of the hospital. The hospital is also currently implementing a new leadership framework based on the book *Hardwiring Excellence*. The framework, coupled with a newly implemented staff performance evaluation process, will allow leadership to identify areas of the hospital environment that are working well that they can build upon as well as areas for improvement and growth. Dedicating resources to improving staff performance and satisfaction will ultimately lead to the provision of high-quality care and provides opportunities to strengthen community trust that assures those who choose to provide financial support are getting the best return on their investment.

Strategy 2.3: Create a stable provider network, including specialty clinics.

As mentioned earlier, NCH has been able to add three permanent physicians to its team and is in the process of adding additional providers in other areas. Partnerships with regional providers have allowed greater access to specialty services, and membership in the Sunflower Health Network has created an opportunity for cost-sharing for supplies and networking.

The hospital has begun to engage in collaborative projects to address behavioral health concerns through programs like Kansas Moms in Mind, which focuses on postpartum depression. Implementation of telehealth services has also allowed NCH to provide access to other services and specialties that were not previously available in the area.

2.1 Increase regional funding support.

[Timeline: February 2022- December 2024]

- 2.1.1 [UPDATED] Update fundraising information packets to reflect current funding opportunities.**
- 2.1.2** Identify strategies for and implement an employee giving program.
- 2.1.3** Align grant writing efforts with strategic planning priorities.
- 2.1.4** Explore opportunities for increased support through local taxation funds.

Champions: CEO, Foundation/Communications Director, Risk and Quality Director

2.2 Promote a sustainable hospital environment.

[Timeline: February 2022- December 2024]

- 2.2.1 [UPDATED] Implement systems to assess, develop, and effectively utilize staff skills and capacities.**
- 2.2.2** Maximize cost-sharing service opportunities.
- 2.2.3 [NEW] Develop a plan to improve and expand telehealth services and capabilities.**
- 2.2.4 [NEW] Implement systems that assure accurate, timely, and efficient billing processes.**

Champions: CEO, CFO, Human Resources Director, Risk and Quality Director, Chief Information Officer

2.3 Create a stable provider network including specialty clinics.

[Timeline: February 2022- December 2024]

- 2.3.1** Identify existing and potential opportunities to engage in collaborative partnerships.
- 2.3.2** Recruit and retain providers.

Champions: CEO, Human Resources Director, Outpatient & Specialty Clinic Manager, Foundation/Communications Director

Strategic Focus Area 3

Recruitment and Retention

GOAL

Norton County Hospital attracts and develops qualified providers and staff that demonstrate long-term commitment to the hospital/clinic.

OBJECTIVES

- Improve sense of support and connectivity among providers and staff.
- Generate new opportunities for provider/staff recruitment and retention.
- Enhance menu of recruitment and retention incentives.

DASHBOARD MEASURES

- Turnover and retention rates
- Provider contracts
- Healthcare Provider Shortage Area Score
- Costs associated with contracted service fees
- Employee satisfaction scores and exit feedback

HEALTH NEEDS

1. Healthcare access and affordability
2. Behavioral health services
6. Cancer has the greatest impact on community health

STATUS UPDATES

Strategy 3.1: Develop regional efforts that promote recruitment.

In 2019, NCH assembled a task force of local business leaders to identify possible incentives that could be offered to potential candidates. This group met for one year and developed a list that was presented to the NCH Board of Trustees in March of 2020. Examples of recommendations that have been implemented since that time include funding for tuition assistance and student loan repayment. NCH also monitors local efforts led by the Norton Area Chamber of Commerce and Norton County Economic Development to address community concerns related to housing availability, business development, and childcare.

Strategy 3.2: Explore best way to incentivize long-term commitment.

NCH communicates regularly with peer hospitals via the Sunflower Health Network to identify opportunities for long-term provider retention and partners with local economic development and community colleges to

enhance educational opportunities and overall quality of life in the surrounding community.

NCH has established an internal Recruitment and Retention committee made up of staff from across the organization to develop activities that improve workplace communication, collaboration, and a positive work culture overall. This team is also working to identify strategies that better integrate providers into the community to build internal and external relationships.

Strategy 3.3: Develop current employees to fill needed positions.

NCH has recently implemented a new talent management system that will standardize performance evaluation processes, improve tracking of training and development needs, and assist staff in establishing professional development goals. As part of the *Hardwiring Excellence* process and with the assistance of funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Pathways grant, NCH staff will participate in training programs led by the Kansas Leadership Center through 2023.

The hospital currently offers tuition assistance and student loan-repayment funds to assist staff and providers interested in advancing their education. The hospital also partners with Colby Community College to offer nursing scholarships and preceptorship opportunities and are developing scholarships for individuals interested in obtaining licenses or certifications in nursing and other healthcare related fields through the Norton Regional Health Foundation.

3.1 Develop regional efforts that promote recruitment.

[Timeline March 2022 – December 2023]

3.1.1 [NEW] Identify opportunities to collaborate with local business organizations, schools, and institutions of higher learning on recruitment activities.

3.1.2 Develop outreach efforts and a range of opportunities for staff spouses/families.

Champions: CEO, Human Resources Director, NCH Recruitment and Retention Committee, Colby Community College Leadership

3.2 Explore best way to incentivize long-term commitment.

[Timeline: February 2022 – December 2024]

3.2.1 Reach out to peer organizations to research best practices for incentivizing long-term commitments.

3.2.2 Work with Norton Regional Health Foundation and others to explore opportunities to fund incentives.

3.2.3 Identify and implement strategies that foster a positive workplace culture.

3.2.4 Create community integration opportunities for providers and staff.

Champions: CEO, Human Resources Director, Foundation/ Communications Director

3.3 Develop current employees to fill needed positions.

[Timeline: February 2022 – December 2024]

3.3.1 [UPDATED] Utilize Talent Management System to develop staff professional development plans.

3.3.2 [NEW] Explore opportunities to partner with regional education institutions to “grow our own” staff.

Champions: CEO, Human Resources Director, Chief Information Officer, Colby Community College Leadership

Strategic Focus Area 4

Regional Engagement and Needs

GOAL

Norton County region looks to Norton County Hospital for all health-related needs.

OBJECTIVES

- Communities in Norton County and the surrounding region look to the hospital as a trusted and credible organization.
- Norton County Hospital collaborates with other providers to offer integrated services.
- Hospital and Health Department staff are better able to communicate community needs and how the organization addresses these needs.

DASHBOARD MEASURES

- Percent of community seeking services at NCH
- Progress on Pathways grant indicators for measuring community health
- Number of patients who reside outside of Norton County
- Number of patients seeking specialty care at NCH
- Patient satisfaction data

HEALTH NEEDS

1. Healthcare access and affordability
2. Behavioral health services
3. Support for policies that prohibit the use of commercial tobacco products in public spaces
4. Healthy eating options
5. Options for physical activity

STATUS UPDATES

Strategy 4.1: Integrate health services.

In 2019, NCH began offering tele-behavioral health services to address the gaps in resources to meet this health need as expressed by the community. NCH is also adding new specialty providers in 2022 to address other gaps in services. The most recent Community Health Needs Assessment indicates that the same health needs that were top of mind in 2018 remain a priority for the community, and NCH is committed to continue working to identify resources to meet these needs for the region.

Strategy 4.2: Improve patient confidence and positive experiences of care.

NCH is currently implementing systems and reviewing processes to improve opportunities for patient feedback, including re-engagement of the Patient and Family Advisory Council. The hospital has also been exploring new technology to improve inpatient experiences, updating patient privacy processes, and providing staff education on managing patient privacy.

NCH has implemented opportunities for the community to engage with providers through the “Walk with a Doc” program and providing hospital updates through a variety of means including social media and other in-person, print, and online campaigns.

Strategy 4.3: Collaborate with the Norton Regional Health Foundation and County Health Department to lead promotion of healthy living in the region.

In 2020, Norton Regional Health Foundation secured a Blue Cross Blue Shield Pathways to a Healthy Kansas grant focused on improving healthy living in the community. This grant continues through 2024. The Foundation continues to work with the City of Norton on multimodal transportation plans and a local food assessment. The Foundation is also working in collaboration with local school districts to address community issues related to vaping and childcare.

The hospital’s relationship with the Kansas Hospital Association and the Pathways to a Healthy Kansas grant led to implementation of the “Walk with a Doc” program and it expects to receive additional support from peer hospitals as part of the Sunflower Health Network.

4.1 Integrate health services.

[Timeline February 2022 – December 2024]

- 4.1.1** Evaluate the gap between needs and resources for areas identified in the 2021 needs assessment and market analysis.
- 4.1.2** Develop cross-sector workgroups to address gaps in services, review best practices, and develop integrated programs to address identified needs.
- 4.1.3** Identify and pursue funding opportunities to develop programs.

Champions: CEO, Outpatient & Specialty Clinic Manager, NCH Health Coach, Norton Co. Health Department Administrator, High Plains Mental Health, Valley Hope

4.2 Improve patient confidence and positive experiences of care.

[Timeline: February 2022 – December 2024]

- 4.2.1** Identify areas of improvement within daily patient encounters.
- 4.2.2** Address areas of improvement by standardizing processes throughout the facility based on best practices.
- 4.2.3** Strategically communicate efforts to improve care and positive results to staff and the community.

Champions: CEO, CIO, Risk and Quality Director, Rehabilitation Manager, Radiology Manager, Outpatient & Specialty Clinic Manager, Patient and Family Advisory Council

4.3 Collaborate with the Regional Health Foundation and County Health Department to lead promotion of healthy living in the region.

[Timeline: February 2022 – December 2024]

- 4.3.1** Identify additional partners in this effort.
- 4.3.2** Reach out to peer hospitals to gain information on community activities.
- 4.3.3** Develop a plan to initiate higher levels of internal organizational and regional engagement.
- 4.3.4** Lay the groundwork for future healthy organizational and public policy development.

Champions: CEO; Trauma, Emergency Preparedness, and Safety Manager; Employee Health Nurse; Pathways Grant Coordinator; Foundation/Communications Director; Norton Co. Health Department Administrator

Moving Forward

This plan aligns with the Norton County Hospital's mission: ***Norton County Hospital meets the evolving health care needs of our region and provides an exceptional staff and patient experience to empower health and wellness at any stage of life.*** The strategic planning effort was informed by stakeholder input, as well as data related to trends, conditions, challenges, and opportunities.

A crucial step to ensuring a strategic plan's effectiveness is clearly communicating the roles of stakeholders. When they understand their roles, stakeholders actively work together to implement strategies, learn from their efforts, adapt, and continue to move forward until the desired outcomes are accomplished. During the planning process, champions were identified for each focus area strategy. These leaders will not necessarily be the ones doing the work associated with their named strategy; instead, they will *facilitate* the work. Performance measures will be used to track changes in productivity, effectiveness, and/or efficiency. Over time, Norton County Hospital will be able to see progress towards objectives in each focus area, which will lead the organization to achieve their overall desired end-results.

This strategic plan is a living document. Updates will constantly inform, and perhaps change, the course of the plan. Adaptability ensures that the organization may stay attuned to the needs of its stakeholders—patients and their families, staff, volunteers, donors, and regional citizens at-large.

These recommended steps will help to ensure Norton County Hospital makes progress toward stated goals and objectives:

- The Norton County Hospital Board of Trustees, serving in a governance capacity, should review, revise as needed, and approve the plans.
- Ongoing strategic “thinking and doing” is required if any progress is to be made toward goals and objectives. WSU has provided (separately) tools to guide the work of leaders as they implement strategies, monitor progress, and adapt strategies based on learnings and progress.

A design team, composed of NCH leadership and members from the Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, facilitated this planning process. The report has been prepared by WSU CEI.