



**BlueCross
BlueShield**
Minnesota

THE BlueCross
TRAILBLAZER
TOUR



**Stakeholder
Engagement
Report**

2017



The health care system should work for everyone. We want the best for our communities, our businesses, our neighbors and our families.

At the same time, our state is changing. Significant demographic shifts are taking place throughout Minnesota. We are getting older. We are getting more diverse. Change of this magnitude often comes with shifts in health care needs as well.

I am continually amazed by how Minnesotans of all backgrounds are willing to move health forward in innovative ways. This is not easy work. It takes time, focus, and perhaps most importantly, it takes collaboration.

In a state where we have a long tradition of addressing important health issues through public-private partnerships, building paths to meaningful reforms has always been a group effort. By partnering with both people and communities, Blue Cross is helping provide the tools and resources Minnesotans need to thrive.

At Blue Cross, corporate social responsibility is a longstanding part of who we are. It began more than 80 years ago, when we became the country's first prepaid health care network, and it continues today as we remain committed to meeting with stakeholders, listening to their feedback and putting ideas into action.

It was in this spirit that Blue Cross convened a series of meetings across the state in order to talk with community leaders about what's working – and what's not – in health care. While every community had its own unique stories to tell, some common themes emerged.

One undeniable truth was apparent in every community we visited – people can do amazing things to improve health in the places they call “home.” We have been fortunate to partner with many of them.

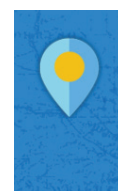
In this report, we are proud to share with you the themes and takeaways from Blue Cross' Trailblazer Tour that, collectively, can lead to meaningful change for a healthier Minnesota.

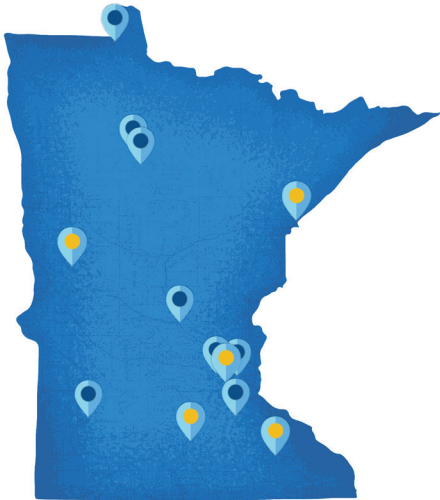
There are many Trailblazers among us. People who are creative, passionate and dedicated to building stronger neighborhoods and communities. I hope the information presented here will spark even more productive dialogue about how, together, we can continue to make a healthy difference in people's lives – both now and in the future.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Guyette". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael Guyette
President and chief executive officer





INTRODUCTION

In June 2016, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota launched the Trailblazer Tour to highlight remarkable Minnesota businesses and organizations for their innovative approaches to moving health forward. In total, 13 Trailblazer stories from across the state were featured on the Trailblazer Tour website, which became the starting point for powerful discussions about improving health for all Minnesotans.

Blue Cross paired the virtual Trailblazer Tour with a series of five in-person meetings across the state with a broad array of community leaders – creating constructive dialogues about the future of health care.

Through sharing information and experiences, we learn from each other and can continue to work together to improve lives and transform health care. The program is part of Blue Cross' longstanding dedication to engaging with the community and its commitment to supporting the neighborhoods in which Minnesotans live, work and play.

- Talking with Mankato: September 19, 2016
- Talking with Rochester: October 21, 2016
- Talking with Duluth: November 15, 2016
- Talking with Minneapolis: December 19, 2016
- Coming together for health: Lakes Country Region: April 28, 2017
- Stories available on Trailblazer website

WHY WE'RE DOING THIS

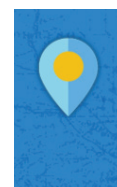
The Trailblazer Tour stakeholder engagement meetings help Blue Cross better understand community concerns – as well as opportunities – and use that insight to help shape future change in our health care system.

Minnesota consistently ranks as one of the healthiest states in the nation. It's an accolade to be proud of – but it doesn't tell the full story.

The reality is that our state struggles with some of the highest health disparities in the country. Race, geography, and economic status are among the largest determinants of health, and many Minnesotans do not have the same outcomes or opportunities.

As a mission-driven, non-profit organization, Blue Cross is committed to improving the health of all Minnesotans. Many public-private partnerships are already making a difference at the community level and our goal is to help identify and grow future opportunities so we can all work towards a future where all Minnesotans have a chance for better health. Bringing local leaders and stakeholders together to take action in their neighborhoods is transformative and not dependent on broad legislative change.

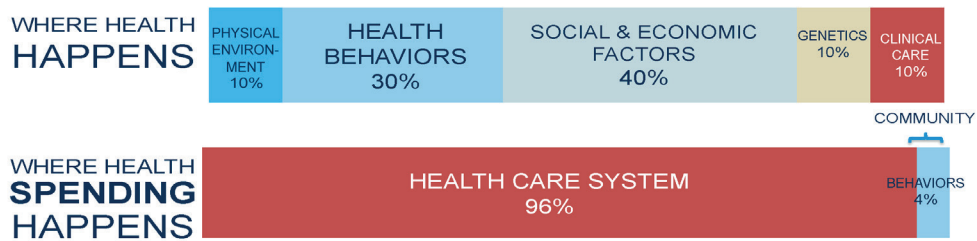
We took this conversation on the road and into communities across the state. We spoke with people already hard at work and explored how we can all work together in the future to move health forward.



Here's what we know:

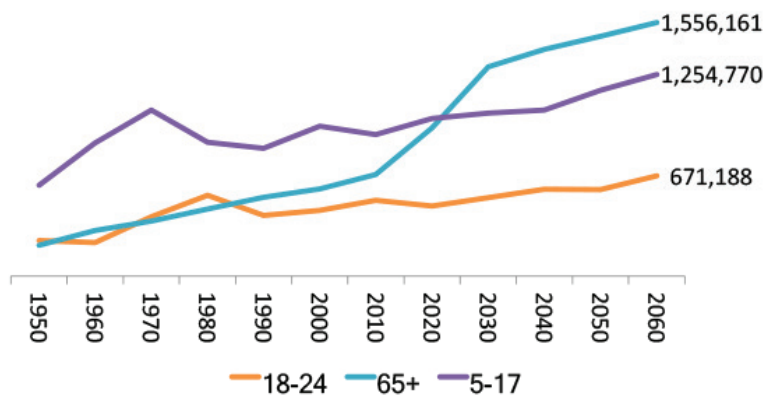
80 percent of health is determined by physical environment, socioeconomic factors and health behavior – yet nearly all of health-related spending happens within the health care system.

- For example, living in a neighborhood that lacks a full-service grocery store (or has a high prevalence of convenience foods) creates an environment where healthy choices are more difficult and costly.
- Low-income populations suffer disproportionately from poorer health. Financial stress is linked to health problems such as anxiety, depression and unhealthy coping behaviors. Conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and substance abuse can also worsen.
- Transportation connects people and places. An over-emphasis and dependence on cars and roads, lack of alternatives, and limited public transit contributes to disparities in access to employment for low-income families.



Minnesota is getting older and more diverse.

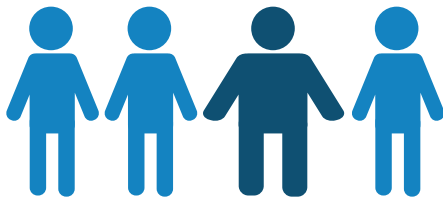
- By 2020, there will be more Minnesotans who are 65+ than school age children for the first time.
- By 2030, more than 1 in 5 Minnesotans will be 65+, including all baby boomers.
- By 2035, 25% of Minnesota's population will be people of color.



Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center

Obesity and chronic conditions such as diabetes are on the rise.

- In 1994, no state had more than a 20% prevalence of obesity. Today, every single state's obesity prevalence is higher than 20%.
- Obesity correlates to a rise in chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, liver disease, and lung disease.
- Even though we have recently seen a decrease in Minnesota's obesity rate, Minnesotans' rate of diabetes has nearly doubled in the past 20 years.
- Only 1 in 5 Minnesotans is getting the recommended level of physical activity.



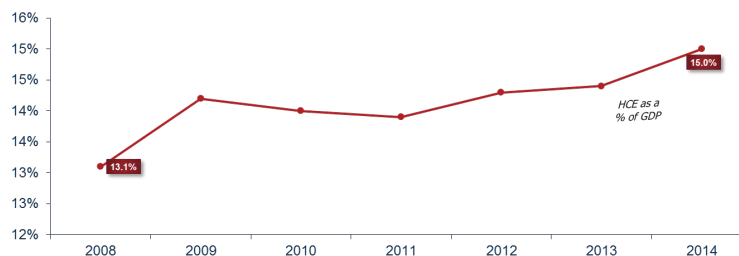
1 out of every 4 Minnesotans is obese.

Health care costs continue to grow.

- National health care spending is now \$2.7 trillion dollars, and nearly 18% of the United States' GDP. It is expected to reach 25% of GDP by 2022.
- Rising costs are increasingly being borne by consumers and more than 60% of all personal bankruptcies in the United States are related to medical expenses.
- Nearly one-third of Minnesota's entire state budget is spent on health care, but our current system is failing to address the majority of issues that significantly impact health.

MINNESOTA HEALTHCARE SPENDING

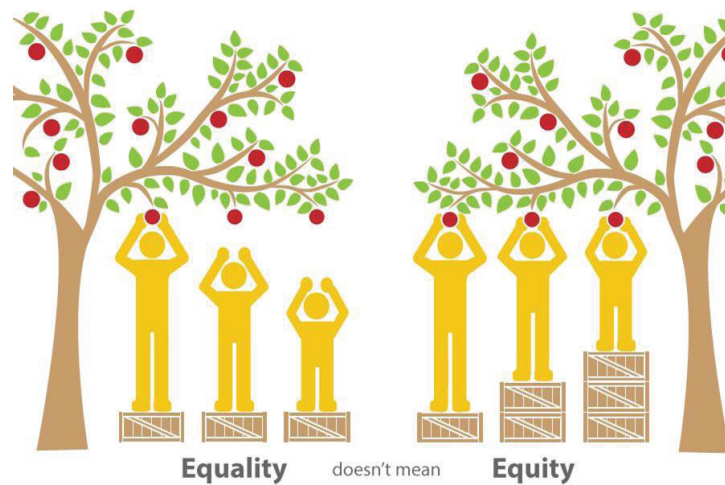
Increases in health care costs are significantly higher than the rate of inflation.



Source: PwC Health Research Institute 2015 Consumer Survey (Medical Cost Trend: Behind the Numbers 2016), MDH, and SHADAC, <https://wronadamslaw.com/most-common-reasons-for-filing-bankruptcy/>

Health inequity is widespread and access to medical care is unequal.

- Your race and your zip code have a dramatic impact on life expectancy. Along one 3-mile stretch of Interstate 94 in Minneapolis, for example, the life expectancy varies by up to 13 years.
- One-third of Minnesota counties have fewer than eight physicians per 10,000 residents, especially in more rural areas.
- Treating people the same doesn't yield the same results. We must focus resources on helping those who face significant barriers to achieving optimal health outcomes.



Stakeholder meeting objectives

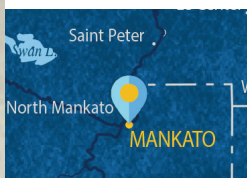
In five Minnesota cities, Blue Cross convened a wide array of stakeholders representing government, business, education, nonprofits, public health and the health care industry to address these objectives:

- Celebrate innovation and partnership
- Listen and engage in dialogue about community perspectives, ideas and concerns
- Share information about the landscape for health
- Explore opportunities to work together
- Translate community needs into future action

FEATURED TRAILBLAZERS

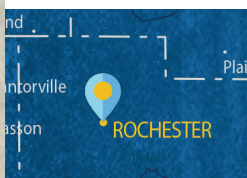
Moving health forward in their communities

During our tour of Mankato, Rochester, Duluth, Fergus Falls/Lakes Country region and Minneapolis, Blue Cross recognized one Trailblazer at each meeting for their innovative work in the community and each Trailblazer shared their story.



Mankato – Doug Jaeger, Open Door Health Center

Created more than 20 years ago to meet the health needs of low-income, uninsured women and children, the Open Door Health Center (ODHC) has grown to offer dental, medical, and behavioral health services all under one roof. ODHC is focused on identifying service gaps in the Mankato community and evolving to meet those needs. The clinic completed a renovation and expansion in 2015, thanks in part to a grant from Blue Cross, and provides an integrated approach to health care with a full spectrum of services. ODHC utilizes mobile clinics as well, which are critical to reducing health disparities in rural communities. ODHC has served patients in more than 50 counties in Minnesota, as well as neighboring areas in Iowa and South Dakota.



Rochester – Dr. Mikel Prieto, Mayo Clinic

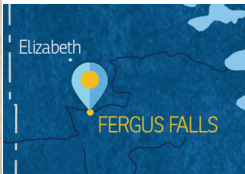
Patients experiencing kidney failure are often faced with years of dialysis and long waiting lists for donor kidneys. Mayo Clinic's **Living Donor Kidney Program** is working to change that through its Paired Donation Program. In cases where a friend or family member wants to donate a kidney to a friend but isn't a match, the program creates a "donor chain" where three or more people can be matched with donors. Furthermore, Blue Cross and Mayo Clinic have partnered to start transplant conversations before the patient faces the need for dialysis by providing early identification and easy access to information about preemptive kidney transplants and living donors – which result in a longer life span, higher quality of life, and cost savings of between \$400,000-\$700,000 per patient.





Duluth – Tony Cuneo, Zeitgeist Center for Arts

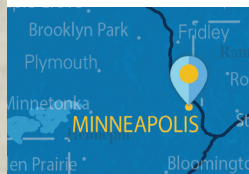
Duluth’s Lincoln Park neighborhood is one of the most densely populated in the area, has the city’s lowest average income and is designated as a “food desert” by the United States Department of Agriculture. With the help of Blue Cross and other community partners, Zeitgeist Center for Arts and Community launched the **Fair Food Access Campaign**, which has decreased the percentage of Lincoln Park residents experiencing food insecurity from 40% to 22%. Outcomes include the first community garden in the neighborhood, a local farmer’s market, a Grocery Express delivery bus route and a forthcoming deep winter greenhouse and garden, which will allow residents to grow healthy food year-round.



Lakes Country Region – Jeremy Kovash, Lakes Country Service Cooperative

The Fresh Connect Food Hub, a project of the Lakes Country Service Cooperative, brings locally grown, always-fresh food to schools, nursing homes and nonprofits in its nine-county service area. The **Fresh Connect Food Hub** grew out of a community issue: educators, families and community leaders saw a need for access to fresh ingredients in places where it’s all too easy to reach for a frozen, processed option. The program has delivered 100,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to 25 participating institutions. It operates on a seasonal basis and sources its fresh foods from 12-15 local growers.





Minneapolis – Latrisha Vetaw, NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center

Located in North Minneapolis, NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center has been a long-time partner of Blue Cross and the Center for Prevention. The partnership focuses on tobacco prevention and promotes healthy eating and physical activity. NorthPoint offers a full-service medical clinic and food shelf. The organization also partners with Nice Ride MN on the Orange Bike Program, which allows North Minneapolis residents to take a bike home for the season. Residents who attend four community events and use the bike at least twice per week receive a \$200 voucher to a local retailer to purchase a bike of their own. NorthPoint uses a peer-to-peer approach and continues to expand its services to help residents create total care plans for healthier lives.



These Trailblazers are leading the way with innovative solutions that address healthy eating, exercise, access to care and health care affordability. The formula of collaboration and customization to fit a community’s unique needs can further shape the landscape of health care in our state.

To learn about more Trailblazers and their work to improve health in Minnesota, please visit bluecrossmn.com/trailblazer.

WHAT WE LEARNED

At each Trailblazer meeting, participants addressed a number of questions designed to facilitate discussion. Nothing was off-limits and all participants were encouraged to dream big about a more equitable and affordable future of health care for all.

What would you like to see in a world-class health system?

What can companies like Blue Cross do to improve health in our communities?

What can we do collectively to help citizens lead healthier lives?

In addition to health insurance companies, what else and who else can help drive change and innovation?

Can you think of instances when a person's full health potential has been hindered? Why did this happen?

Who else in your community should be a part of discussions like these in the future?

How can partnerships across industries help us move health forward?

What is the goal of health care innovation?

Where should we focus investments to improve health?

We are grateful to everyone who participated in these stakeholder engagement meetings for their willingness to challenge the status quo and provide input. After each meeting, Blue Cross identified primary themes and provided comprehensive meeting notes to all participants.

Four themes emerged from the stakeholder engagement meetings.



1. Collaboration and integration need to be at the core of everything we do.

There are many organizations doing innovative, important work throughout Minnesota, but that work often remains isolated. There is tremendous opportunity to extend success across communities (geographic, racial or otherwise).

Opportunities identified to increase access and integration include:

- Offer health care services in schools to decrease barriers to care for students.
- Develop streamlined, privacy-compliant processes for clinics and hospitals to share information to advance the health of their patients.
- Focus on transportation-related services as this is a major barrier in many communities.
- Create partnerships across sectors such as social services, education and the medical community to help foster healthy choices.
- Improve care coordination between the traditional sick care system and well-care/prevention efforts.



2. Information must be better, simpler and more accessible.

From data sharing to demystifying the complexities of health care “lingo,” the healthcare industry needs to provide better information across the board.

Specific topics stakeholder groups addressed included:

- Language barriers add another layer to an already complicated topic. Patients who are not fluent in English (or perhaps don’t speak it all) feel lost and unable to self-advocate. Schools are often doing this in significant, meaningful ways and other sectors could learn from their experiences.
- Smartphone apps and social media make it easier to incorporate health care into our daily lives and communicate straight-forward information.
- Technology such as telemedicine increases access to care by connecting people electronically with physicians and health care organizations.
- After a diagnosis, how can complete information about a person’s diagnosis, treatment options, and potential outcomes be best communicated in a clear and understandable way?



3. We have to be willing to take risks, try new things and invest.

Risk is inherent to innovation. Making real change requires acceptance of risk and the possibility of failure.

Discussion on this topic followed these themes:

- Innovation costs money and we need to be willing to spend it on pilot programs.
- Likewise, there are many existing projects that require additional investment to maintain or scale up what's working to reach more people in need. Unfortunately, promising programs have disappeared due to lack of continued funding.
- Innovation can be a “re-generation” of existing ideas. For example, in some parts of the state, doctor house calls have regained popularity and are increasingly valuable.
- Small incentives such as tax credits for health club memberships could help encourage healthy behavior.
- Friendly or incentivized competition in the workplace or on a community level can inspire people to make healthy choices.



4. Care must be inclusive and personalized.

Historically, large groups of people have been categorized together and assumptions about their health have been made based on one or more factors – often without the full picture of the individual. The health care industry needs more providers and other influencers who look like and share similar life experiences with the patients and clients they serve, and a deeper commitment to culturally responsive care.

Several challenges and opportunities surfaced, including:

- Some communities are deeply distrustful of health care and medical systems. It is important that we find ways to bring the system to them and break down barriers. People from different backgrounds access health care in different ways.
- Mobile clinics and community paramedics can help make health care more accessible.
- Issues of accessibility and cultural sensitivity are especially important in regards to mental health services. Are they being funded adequately?

WHAT COMES NEXT

The insights gained during the Trailblazer Tour are invaluable to Blue Cross as we work in communities and with policymakers to move health forward. Through our corporate responsibility program, we will build on existing work throughout our company to bring focus to the issues identified in this report.

We plan to celebrate more success stories and engage with more communities so we can put it to work for the benefit of all. We will continue to highlight successful innovations with the hope of inspiring actions that will expand what works. We will listen to what's not working and commit ourselves to influencing people and policy to make it better.



Trying new things

The rapidly evolving health care landscape is rich with opportunity to better connect with and help consumers. We are looking for new ways to engage Minnesotans with health information and improve their interactions with the health care system. And we know we can't do it alone. That's why we're making investments in innovative startup companies approaching health care in an entirely new way such as online therapy for mental health, mobile services for primary and urgent care, and in-home primary care.



Engaging in conversations

Blue Cross has embedded health equity into our business. We're examining how the decisions we make on a day-to-day basis can help to close gaps in health outcomes and identify practices that unintentionally perpetuate them. Recent milestones include launching programs to increase intercultural competency. We recognize that there is significant work ahead of us but we welcome the challenge.



Continuing the Trailblazer Tour

We will be in communities around the state to engage with Minnesotans about health. You can subscribe to updates from the Trailblazer Tour and read the complete stories of all 13 Trailblazers across Minnesota at bluecrossmn.org/trailblazer.

ABOUT BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MINNESOTA



\$300 million
in salaries
and wages

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota was chartered in 1933 as Minnesota's first health plan and continues to carry out our mission today to make a healthy difference in people's lives. A nonprofit, taxable organization, Blue Cross is the leading health plan in Minnesota, covering nearly 2.9 million members. With approximately 3,500 employees in Minnesota, Blue Cross boasts one of the lowest administrative cost levels in the country – less than 10 cents of every dollar.



3,500
employees
statewide

On average, Blue Cross processes more than 100,000 claims and 12,000 calls per day. We focus our efforts on advancing health equity, giving people access to the tools and resources they need to thrive and improving conditions where people live, learn, work and play.



100,865
claims a day

Blue Cross believes in giving back to our community. The Blue Cross Foundation contributed \$4.1 million in funding to help communities experiencing health inequities overcome unfair and unjust barriers to health. Additionally, the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross provided approximately \$15 million in 2016 to initiatives aimed at increasing healthy eating and physical activity, advancing health equity and reducing tobacco use.



12,000
calls a day