



AMERICA'S
ESSENTIAL
HOSPITALS

America's Essential Hospitals

2013-2018 Strategic Plan

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Introduction

America's Essential Hospitals, formerly the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (NAPH), has a rich history and lengthy record of accomplishments on behalf of its members. Since its inception, America's Essential Hospitals has been well recognized for its expertise on issues affecting care for the country's most vulnerable patients. This deep knowledge revolves around not only the organization's strenuous advocacy efforts, but also its contributions toward research on safety net issues, improving quality of care, and furthering good governance among its members.

The association has undergone a series of organizational changes over the past two years, from the retirement of its founder and longtime executive director to the hiring of a new president and CEO. Several new staff also have joined the senior management team, which has worked to transition America's Essential Hospitals as it strives to reflect the rapidly changing health care landscape. During this transition, the 2010-2013 strategic plan served as an effective roadmap for members, the governance boards, and staff.

In 2012, America's Essential Hospitals embarked on a yearlong process to create a new strategic plan designed to reflect its members' evolving needs and to set the stage for the next five years of association programming and growth. The planning process was comprehensive, including interviews with members and staff, focus group research, an electronic member survey, and a daylong joint session of the America's Essential Hospitals executive committee and the board of the Essential Hospitals Institute (formerly the National Public Health and Hospital Institute). The process was led by the newly formed strategic planning committee, which includes representation from the America's Essential Hospitals executive committee, the Essential Hospitals Institute board, and the membership.

In light of the continued evolution of health care, the strategic planning committee also reviewed and assessed the current association vision and mission statements. The committee recommends revisions that will merge the vision and mission statements into a more concise and future-focused single mission statement.

During the daylong planning session, our leaders and partners recognized that America's Essential Hospitals also needs a consensus statement regarding the commitment to service prospective member organizations should embody when they seek to join. These discussions resulted in a new service commitment statement, which America's Essential Hospitals will introduce to its members.

Mission Statement

The America's Essential Hospitals mission and vision statements have provided a solid foundation for the association's work for many years. However, since the implementation of the previous strategic plan, the landscape for America's Essential Hospitals, internally and externally, has changed significantly:

- Significant legislative actions have been taken.
- Health care delivery has undergone dramatic changes.
- The association has seen leadership changes.
- Association membership has grown and diversified.
- The association's and institute's program portfolios have expanded, especially in research and quality improvement.

The committee wanted to ensure America's Essential Hospitals has a comprehensive statement that reflects these changes, captures its mission and that of its members, and builds on the transformational work of the previous strategic plan.

America's Essential Hospitals Mission Statement

America's Essential Hospitals champions excellence in health care for all, regardless of social or economic circumstance, and advances the work of hospitals and health systems committed to ensuring access to care and optimal health for America's most vulnerable people.

America's Essential Hospitals membership has grown and diversified, a trend expected to continue. The current membership now comprises a wide variety of hospitals and health systems, including public hospitals, voluntary nonprofits, and academic medical centers. Many have complex governance structures. During the planning process, it became clear that America's Essential Hospitals must publicly define, through a shared commitment to service, the values that bind its members together.

America's Essential Hospitals Members' Commitment to Service

America's Essential Hospitals members commit to providing access to high-quality health care to all, especially to vulnerable populations. We are innovative hospitals and health systems that constantly strive to deliver the most efficient and effective care for those in greatest need, improving patient outcomes and quality of life in the communities we serve.

Strategic Plan Overview

The strategic planning committee did not seek to dramatically alter the association's strategic direction. An understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the delivery of care to vulnerable populations, cultivated throughout the organization's history, remains core to America's Essential Hospitals' identity and the work it pursues. This remains even as it has undergone a major transition coinciding with its current plan: new leadership, stepped-up membership growth, and major new Essential Hospitals Institute grants and contracts designed to support members' health care delivery and finance transformation. The committee believes America's Essential Hospitals need not move in a fundamentally different direction over the next five years, especially as it progresses through the early stages of initiatives launched by its mostly new leadership team under the guidance of the 2010 strategic plan.

Common themes emerged from the interviews, focus groups, leadership meetings, and electronic member survey held over the course of 2012. The themes included broad areas of focus and a series of underlying competencies that will be critical to America's Essential Hospitals' ability to execute the strategic plan. Strategic planning committee members purposefully developed a high-level framework for the new plan with the understanding that the association will periodically review the plan over its five-year course. The America's Essential Hospitals executive committee will use the plan to evaluate the association's performance, and staff will use it to guide their annual work plans.

The strategic plan contains four broad strategic pillars, each supported by two priorities. Advocacy is intentionally listed first here, given the responses from members during the planning process. Members view the association's role as a champion of its members and their patients as a critical priority. These are the four pillars:

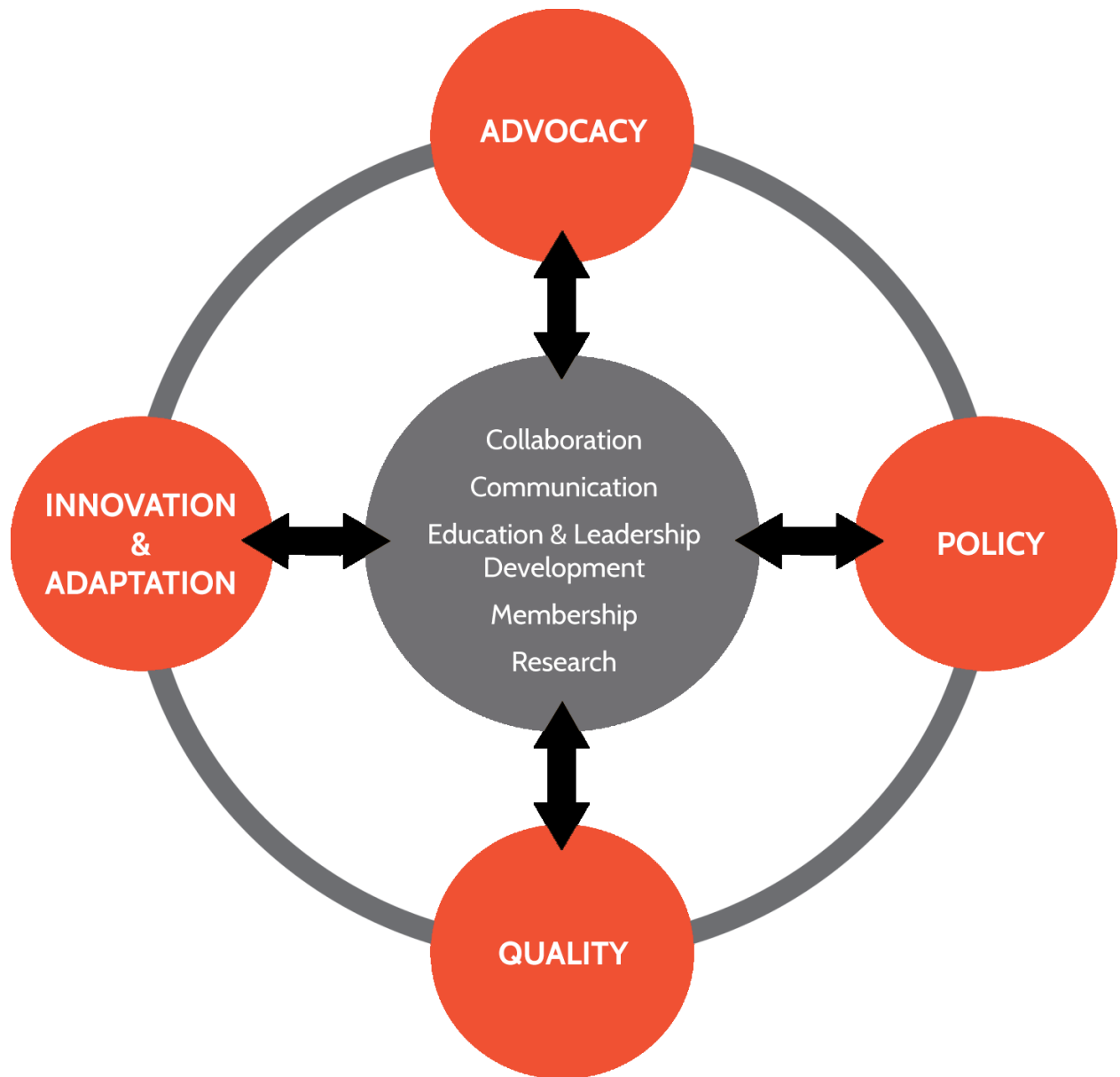
1. Advocacy
2. Policy
3. Quality
4. Innovation and Adaptation

The strategic planning committee also recognized that for America's Essential Hospitals to successfully execute a new strategic plan, it must continually engage in a series of underlying competencies that provide crucial support for the four pillars:

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Education and Leadership Development
- Membership
- Research

Subsequent pages outline the four pillars, supporting priorities, and relevant cross-cutting competencies in more detail. The following graphic (next page) provides a visual overview of the four pillars and their interconnected relationship with the competencies.

America's Essential Hospitals Strategic Model



Strategic Pillars

Advocacy Pillar

America's Essential Hospitals is a highly respected and credible national voice on issues that affect hospitals and health systems that provide care to vulnerable populations. Its members expect the association to ensure that opinion leaders and decision-makers understand the value of the services they provide and the costs they incur. America's Essential Hospitals has a longstanding focus on advocacy and an ongoing commitment to engage on those issues that directly impact members' ability to provide high-quality and innovative care to all, regardless of social and economic circumstance. These priorities support the advocacy pillar:

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will advocate before Congress and the executive branch for the resources needed for hospitals and health systems to care for vulnerable populations – including the uninsured and underinsured – and provide essential community services, such as critical care, emergency preparedness, enabling services, public health services, and health care workforce training.

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will support the continued development of innovative health care delivery and the provision of integrated, seamless, patient-centered care, particularly for vulnerable patient populations, such as the elderly; the poor; those with complex medical, behavioral, or long-term care needs; the newly eligible; and the remaining uninsured.

Policy Pillar

Inextricably linked and equally important to America's Essential Hospitals' advocacy work is the effort to impact federal policy in the legislative, administrative, and judicial branches of government. Members value this aspect of the association and are invested in America's Essential Hospitals broadening its work in the policy arena. Through further robust policy development activities, the association can bring to the table policy ideas that will secure the ability of essential hospitals – those with a safety net role – to care for their patients while improving the overall health care delivery system. America's Essential Hospitals is committed to fully engaging its members in the proactive development of policy based on sound evidence and consistent with members' service commitment. These priorities support the policy pillar:

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will be viewed as a national thought leader with respect to policy development on issues concerning the delivery of care to vulnerable populations and the provision of essential community services.

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will fully engage member hospitals and health systems in policy development work to generate strong positions and recommendations that represent the shared interests of the association's members.

Quality Pillar

America's Essential Hospitals occupies a unique position in the quality arena because of its members' dedication to and experience with care for vulnerable populations. America's Essential

Hospitals will continue to leverage this position and serve as a resource and champion for its members as they strive to provide high-quality, safe, and affordable care that eliminates health care disparities. Since carrying out its previous strategic plan, America's Essential Hospitals has significantly expanded the breadth of its quality portfolio. This work supports member quality efforts and informs the association's policy and advocacy efforts. America's Essential Hospitals is committed to a collaborative and strategic approach to quality, fully understanding that partnerships are critical to effectively and efficiently accomplishing this work. These priorities support the quality pillar:

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will proactively identify and disseminate evidence-based best practices that will raise the quality of care for all – especially for vulnerable populations.

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will work tirelessly to communicate its members' quality leadership to decision-makers and opinion leaders.

Innovation and Adaptation Pillar

America's Essential Hospitals members have pioneered many of the most innovative health care strategies and models over the past decade. Members lead the nation in effective and efficient care delivery transformation models. They also are often distinguished by their mission and work in improving population health. Members look to America's Essential Hospitals to be a source of new evidence-based ideas to support their work and to serve as a vehicle for sharing successful outcomes with each other. The work of Essential Hospitals Institute in this regard is critical, and both the institute and America's Essential Hospitals are committed to supporting members' continued innovation and adaptation. These priorities support the innovation and adaptation pillar:

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will create a continuous learning environment for its members and serve as a convening organization and conduit for member-to-member sharing of innovative models of patient care and hospital operations, with a special emphasis on those that improve care for vulnerable populations.

Priority: America's Essential Hospitals will support its members' efforts to successfully transition to integrated, seamless, and patient-centered systems of care.

Underlying Competencies

America's Essential Hospitals has experienced organizational and programmatic growth over the past several years. Discussions during the strategic planning process identified a series of underlying competencies that cut across the strategic pillars and are vital to the association's successful implementation of the strategic plan. For America's Essential Hospitals to succeed in the priority areas identified through this strategic plan, the organization must focus on the following competencies, which are the building blocks of successful implementation.

Collaboration

America's Essential Hospitals is actively engaged in a number of dynamic collaborative relationships on behalf of its members. Collaborative efforts encompass relationships with other associations and member-driven cooperatives on advocacy and policy issues, as well as partnerships with critical stakeholders in the quality and research arena. These relationships require a significant time commitment by the CEO and senior staff. America's Essential Hospitals will continue this work and expand collaborative activities strategically.

Communication

America's Essential Hospitals understands the importance of effectively communicating both the organization's activities and the excellent work of its members. It will maintain and expand outreach efforts to policymakers, opinion leaders, other health care organizations, and the media. America's Essential Hospitals will continue its commitment to consistent and informative communications with members on a broad variety of issues, including a focus on advocacy efforts. America's Essential Hospitals also will engage members' communications staffs so it can better share information on member achievements and give members an opportunity to leverage association communications tools.

Education and Leadership Development

America's Essential Hospitals is well-known for the education programs it offers to all members, as well as its work to support the development of future health care leaders and the continued professional growth of current hospital executives. The America's Essential Hospitals Fellows Program is consistently recognized as an excellent example of the type of personal advancement the association offers to members and can serve as a model for other association leadership activities. America's Essential Hospitals will strive to develop new ways to support its member in these activities, including the use of effective distance learning methods.

Member Engagement

The financial security, effectiveness, and vibrancy of any association depend on a program of ongoing strategic membership retention and growth. America's Essential Hospitals will strategically recruit new member organizations whose missions align with the member service commitment. America's Essential Hospitals will enhance member engagement through a series of volunteer-led committees reporting to the executive committee. Additionally, the association will improve its effectiveness by broadening its contacts with the leadership and staff at member hospitals.

Research

Sound policy and practice rest on a foundation of clear evidence. America's Essential Hospitals research efforts, which often are funded and conducted through Essential Hospitals Institute, will support the quality, advocacy, and policy work of the association and the innovative adaptation work of member hospitals. America's Essential Hospitals and Essential Hospitals Institute will remain aligned to ensure members' success.