

Wisconsin Owns Wellbeing: Background for Regional Learning Exchanges

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Since 2020, safety net providers have reacting to a steady stream of crises, mirroring how health care functions primarily as a sick care system. Wisconsin Owns Wellbeing (WOW) is about reclaiming agency in setting our own proactive vision for the future and building collaborative actions we can take today to make that vision more probable.

Vision:

The statewide group voted, using a fist-to-five method, to adopt a revised working vision and agreed that the vision will continue to evolve through subsequent regional and statewide engagement. The revised working vision reads:

Wisconsin will have a statewide wellbeing system that optimizes health. This will be accomplished through:

- *a strong and well-developed workforce;*
- *accessible and integrated resources in all communities; and*
- *long lasting, creative, and collaborative relationships with local communities.*

Background: Why Now?

Four organizations representing Wisconsin's safety net (Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics, and Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association) were approached by Roots & Wings Foundation to imagine working together differently. Given our aging population, our ongoing workforce challenges, and increasing social, economic, and political pressures on our nonprofit and safety net organizations, these four organizations thought the time was right to imagine a different future together.

What's more, House Resolution 1 will have major impacts on Wisconsin, bringing new opportunities and challenges with the \$50 Billion Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) launching in 2026 and the addition of Medicaid work requirements in 2027, among other major policy changes. The time is ripe for action.

A View from 30,000 Feet: Statewide Leaders Meeting - December 2, 2025

The WOW Collaborative hosted a meeting of leaders of statewide or regional organizations to engage in initial future thinking, using tools designed by the Institute for the Future. Statewide leaders brainstormed **drivers**, those long-term directional impacts like the current of a river, and **signals**, one-time or small innovations that could become something that alters the current.

- **What If** wellbeing was our north star, instead of crisis response?
- **What If** most people had the supports they needed to live healthy lives?

- **What If** technology enabled us to work smarter, not harder, to reimagine work?
- **What If** we had the resources to do what we do best and trust that others were doing what they do best?

Leaders considered Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Policy (STEEP) **drivers** that are impacting us.

DRIVERS				
SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL	ECONOMIC	ENVIRONMENTAL	POLITICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social isolation • Misinformation • Eroding trust • Increased mutual aid networks • Increased home caregiving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI • Remote patient monitoring • Remote work • Uneven broadband access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening income gap • Alternative economic models (coops, land trusts) • Wealth transfer • Universal basic income pilots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Extreme weather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polarization • Advocacy mobilization (e.g., older adults) • Efforts to protect democracy • Increased civic engagement

Leaders researched **signals** by exploring a prompt about the future of safety net services. Each group elevated a top signal to the group for consideration: Aging, Benefit cliffs, Funding cuts, Traditional health insurance, and Wellbeing. Leaders then used an exercise called “riding two curves” to explore the current system, what signals are pointing to the future system, and what assets we could carry forward to develop the new future.

5 Regional Learning Exchanges in 2026

Five Regional Learning Exchanges will take place across Wisconsin in 2026, starting where the statewide leaders left off. Building from visioning conducted in December 2025, the WOW Collaborative will host five Regional Learning Exchanges in 2026. During each Regional Learning Exchange, participants will:

1. Celebrate and learn from community collaborations already operating in the region
2. Discuss priority issues, challenges, and opportunities in the region, connecting them to broader state and national trends
3. Begin to develop strategies to grow or enhance collaboration at all stages of development
4. Identify ways that statewide partners can better support and learn from local partners to make meaningful collaborative impact, regionally and statewide
5. Build and strengthen relationships across organizations

Register today for the event that best matches your service area!

- [Jan. 27, 2026: Market on River, Chippewa Falls](#)
- [Feb. 17, 2026: Lake of the Torches, Lac du Flambeau](#)
- [Mar. 4, 2026: St. Norbert College, De Pere](#)
- [Mar. 19, 2026: Baraboo Arts, Baraboo](#)
- [Apr. 15, 2026: Waukesha Area Technical College, Pewaukee](#)

