

# **Tacoma Anchor Network Strategic Framework**

**Prepared for the Tacoma Anchor Network  
by Danny Fisher-Bruns**

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## Executive Summary

The Tacoma Anchor Network's participatory strategic planning process from February-May 2021 resulted in a strategic framework that clearly states the Network's intentions of contributing to a more equitable future for Tacoma, while also leaving room for adaptability, learning and growth within the Network. The framework is comprised of a mission statement, Network priorities, and core anchor activities as well as more clarity around Network membership, meeting structure, collaborative decision making, and organizational development.

### Tacoma Anchor Network Mission Statement:

The Tacoma Anchor Network increases coordination between Tacoma's place-based institutions in order to facilitate equitable economic development, reduce health and economic disparities across Tacoma, and adopt an anti-racist approach to addressing systemic inequities.

The Network is committed to strengthening community trust in institutions; improving community health, safety, and wellbeing; and building an economy that allows everyone in Tacoma to achieve their full potential.

### Tacoma Anchor Network Priorities:

The Network is uniquely positioned to address local disparities by focusing on three priority areas:

- **Hiring:** Creating pathways to connect all Tacoma residents to local, stable, and living wage employment and careers.
- **Purchasing:** Increasing purchasing and contracting from local businesses, with a focus on minority- and women-owned businesses.
- **Investing:** Aligning investments to address root causes of housing insecurity and other disparities highlighted in Tacoma's Equity Index.

In addition to these three priority areas, the Network will seek to support other organizations and coalitions pursuing related goals in Tacoma.

### Core Anchor Activities

- **Shifting Operational Dollars and Practices:** Examine and adapt business and workplace practices at all levels, in order to create a lasting shift toward a culture of racial equity.
- **Coordinated Investments:** Align capital investments, grantmaking, or in-kind investments of staff resources or infrastructure to positively influence the social determinants of health.
- **Collective Policy Advocacy:** Advocate to policy-making bodies in order to advance the adoption of successful practices and strategies the Network is piloting, and/or remove barriers to adopting practices that are more equitable.
- **Information Sharing and Mutual Support:** Communicate across organizations to respond to emerging needs more quickly; share success and failures that can support each other's learning and growth; and normalize transparency and openness between organizations.

### Initial Working Groups

In May 2021, the Network aligned around four initial working groups. The goal is to achieve some measurable successes in 2021, lay the groundwork for future working groups, and strengthen the Network's capacity. Throughout the summer of 2021, these groups will clarify their goals and report to the Network on their progress as they move forward.

- **Healthcare Apprenticeship Pathways:** In partnership with the National League of Cities and Workforce Central, the Network will develop pathways for healthcare careers and apprenticeships focused on addressing barriers to workforce participation for low and no-income residents.
- **Local Procurement Landscape:** In partnership with Emerald Cities Collaborative and Health Care Without Harm, the Network will conduct an analysis of the economic impact of local anchor institutions, with the goal of sharing baseline data and identifying opportunities for local procurement and investment with the community.
- **Addressing Affordable Housing:** The Network will survey the landscape of opportunities for anchor institutions to invest in development of affordable housing in Tacoma with the goal of identifying an impactful project in 2021.
- **Organizational Capacity:** The Network will explore funding and resource needs to adequately support collaboration in the coming years.

### Current Anchor Members

- Bates Technical College
- City of Tacoma
- Greater Tacoma Community Foundation
- Metro Parks Tacoma
- MultiCare
- Pierce County Transit
- Tacoma Community College
- Tacoma Housing Authority
- Tacoma Public Schools
- University of Puget Sound
- University of Washington, Tacoma
- Virginia Mason Franciscan Health

## Introduction and Background

This report summarizes the Tacoma Anchor Network's participatory strategic planning process conducted between February and May 2021. The goals of this process were to clarify the mission and priorities of the Network; reflect on the history of the Network to elevate strengths and areas for improvement; and establish a roadmap and guidelines for the Network as it continues to develop.

This report is intended for a variety of audiences. For those new to the Tacoma Anchor Network, this report will help orient you to the history, as well as its current mission and goals of the Network. For those already engaged with the Network, this report will serve as a reference for Network structure, operating norms and priorities.

Networks are living systems, evolving and adapting over time. Yet the written word is inherently static, archiving the ideas of a single point in time. This report marks the beginning of the next chapter for the Tacoma Anchor Network, planting seeds from which many new and, as of yet, unimagined ideas can grow. It is expected that the ideas presented here will continue to grow, develop, and adapt over time as the Network learns its way into the most impactful version of itself.

### A Brief History of the Tacoma Anchor Network

The Tacoma Anchor Network was launched in 2018 to support the community priorities identified in the Tacoma 2025 strategic planning process, particularly economy, workforce, livability, accessibility and equity, education, and civic engagement. The report *Establishing an Anchor Network in Tacoma*<sup>1</sup> articulated the initial alignment between anchor institutions and City of Tacoma priorities, and outlined a process for continued collaboration.

Between 2018 and 2019, the City facilitated regular convenings of anchor stakeholders, building a strong sense of connection and trust. In January 2020, the Network convened to outline priorities and goals, and made significant progress. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought a pause to long-term planning and goal setting.

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the Network served as an information hub to coordinate COVID-19 responses between anchor institutions.

### Defining Key Concepts

**Anchor institutions** are organizations that are rooted in place and wield significant economic and social influence. Often public or nonprofit organizations, they are unlikely to relocate or disinvest from the locations in which they are rooted. In recognition of this unique position, anchor institutions can hold themselves – and each other – accountable to the broader community, by intentionally and voluntarily leveraging their influence to address local disparities in partnership with the most impacted groups in Tacoma.

Such intentionality requires adopting an **anti-racist** approach: a worldview that acknowledges the historical and present harm done to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) by individual and

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<sup>1</sup> The Democracy Collaborative, *Establishing and Anchor Network in Tacoma*, 2018

systemic policies and practices; and a commitment to intentionally transforming these practices in a way that eliminates racial disparities in outcomes and life experiences.

Disparities across communities are often measurable in the **Social Determinants of Health**: the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes.<sup>2</sup> These include social and economic factors such as education, income, family and social support, neighborhood environment, community safety, and access to services. When disaggregated by race, as in **Tacoma's Equity Index**<sup>3</sup>, the social determinants of health often point to prevailing systems of racial inequity which anchor institutions must address. By working collectively to address these disparities, Tacoma's anchor institutions can make a greater impact than would be possible individually, and build a culture of accountability and trust between themselves and the broader community.

## Section 1: Developing the Tacoma Anchor Network Strategic Framework

### Participatory Strategy Development

The Tacoma Anchor Network strategic framework was developed through a participatory process from February - May 2021. The process began with 1-1 interviews with anchor institution champions who had been engaged with the Network. Interviews focused on a retrospective look on the initial years of the Network, as well as reflection on the current strengths and weaknesses, and an aspirational look at what the Network could grow into.

In March 2021, interview themes and insights were presented to the Network for reflection and meaning-making. The purpose of this was twofold: first and foremost, to ensure that Network members had been heard and understood in their interviews, and secondly to present several strategic ideas and concepts that were already emerging within the Network.

Following the March meeting, a draft strategic framework was developed and shared with the Network. Two drop-in feedback and Q&A sessions were held in early April 2021 to provide Network members an opportunity to dig into the material and offer additional ideas and suggestions. Nearly all institutions participated in these sessions.

At the Network's April 2021 meeting, a revised version of the framework which addressed and incorporated ideas from the feedback sessions was shared. This meeting provided an opportunity for the Network as a whole to discuss the framework with each other and offer up additional questions and suggestions.

Between the April and May 2021 Network meetings, anchor champions were encouraged to share the draft framework with other key stakeholders in their respective institutions to ensure engagement and

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<sup>2</sup>Definition taken from "About Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 10, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/about.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Tacoma's Equity Index is an interactive tool that visually highlights disparities in Tacoma. It uses 29 data points sorted into five determinant categories to determine where community members are not able to access services or where services do not meet community needs. For more information on Tacoma's Equity Index please visit: <https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=175030>

buy-in, and to make a final check for any issues that might be contentious or out of alignment with the priorities of individual institutions.

On May 21, 2021, the Network decided to adopt the strategic framework as a guiding document and to move forward with the ideas presented within it.

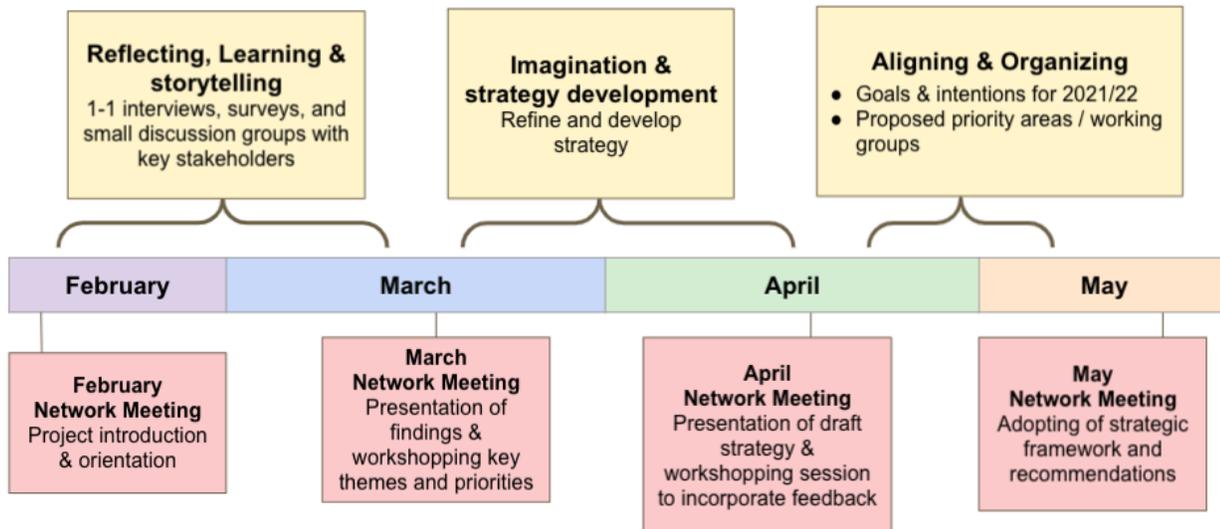


Figure 1: Timeline of 2021 strategic planning process

## Anchor Interview Findings

In February 2021, Danny Fisher-Bruns and Bucoda Warren interviewed the anchor champions from each institution. A full list of interviewees can be found in the appendix. What follows is a summary of the interview themes as presented to the Network on March 18, 2021.

## What is the Tacoma Anchor Network?



Figure 2: A selection of interview quotes. Anchor champions describing the Network in their own words.

The Network’s role in COVID-19 response and recovery was top of mind in all the interviews. All interviewees expressed the significance of the support they found from the Network throughout the pandemic, and acknowledged that this level of support and communication would not have been possible without the intentional trust building that took place over the preceding two years.

Across all interviews, several themes emerged around the Network’s strengths and weaknesses. Information sharing, communication, trust, and nimbleness were among the top strengths, while lack of clarity about goals, ambiguity about the right people to involve in the Network, and lack of tangible wins were at the top of the list of weaknesses and challenges. These strengths and weaknesses point to several tensions that the Network will have to balance in order to be successful. For example, finding a way to remain flexible and nimble enough to be adaptive, while having just enough structure to make it clear how to engage; remaining responsive to immediate needs, while making progress toward “big picture” systemic change.

The strengths, weaknesses/challenges, and implications for the Network’s future are summarized below:

Strengths	Weaknesses/Challenges	Implications
Information sharing and communication	Unclear long-term goals and structure	Participation in the Network is inherently valuable, but the Network’s long-term goals and structure needs development.
Relationships and connections	Getting the right decision makers involved at the right time	Core Network participants have built a strong sense of community among themselves, but are not always the final decision makers at their respective institutions. It is not always clear when and how to involve different levels of decision-makers.
Trust	Lack of tangible wins	Two years have resulted in a very strong foundation of trust that makes anchor champions feel supported and keeps them engaged. This, in itself, is significant. Yet the Network needs to demonstrate a measurable impact in the community.
Flexible and nimble structure	Lack of coordination on communication with those outside the Network	The Network can meet the immediate and changing needs of the members, but it is unclear when and how to collaborate with other partners.
Facilitative leadership allowing space for anchor participants to shape the work	Lack of clarity surrounding decision making or priority setting	Network members feel like they can influence the direction of the group, but there could be more clarity on when and why decisions are being made.

Virtual meetings allowing for greater participation during the pandemic; Effective in-person planning retreats prior to the pandemic	Loss of personal connection with virtual meetings	In the future, a combination of virtual and in-person meetings will be beneficial.
Responsiveness to needs and challenges during the pandemic	Losing sight of big picture goals during the pandemic	The existence of the Network can allow institutions to respond to crisis more effectively. A more robust and dedicated staffing capacity might help the Network balance short- and long-term needs.

### Hopes for the Future

Network members were asked to articulate their hopes for the future of the Network. Overwhelmingly, three themes emerged across all interviews:

- **Articulating the “sweet spot” (i.e. What is the Network uniquely positioned to do?):** There is an implied, but not fully stated “north star” vision for the Network that needed to be clarified. This should include mission, vision, goals, and priority areas.
- **Clarifying decision-making:** What is in-scope for the Network to work on? How do we prioritize issues together? What gets on the agenda? Who from our respective institutions should be involved, and when?
- **Focusing on results and accountability:** Demonstrate successes and ensure that we are learning from failures; hold each other accountable to progress toward collective goals; use data to inform our work; follow-up and follow-through between meetings.

### Emerging Strategic Ideas and Concepts

In discussing the strengths, weaknesses, and hopes for the future, Network members also started pointing to a clear picture of what was needed for the Network. These emerging ideas were presented to the Network at the March 18, 2021 anchor institution meeting and became guiding concepts for the strategic framework.

As a nimble and evolving entity, the Network was seeking a strategy that brought initial clarity to its work, while also leaving room for adaptation, experimentation, and growth in the future.

**Goals, Priorities and Activities** is a framework for connecting the “big picture” mission to the day-to-day activities of the Network.

- The Network should be clear about its long-term mission and the change it is hoping to see through its work.
- Acknowledging that there are many paths to achieve the long-term mission, the Network can prioritize the strategies through which anchor institutions can most effectively contribute to the long-term mission. This defines the “scope” of the Network.
- With a clear mission and scope, the Network can commit time and resources to activities that are aligned with its priorities. The Network can act on opportunities as they present themselves and be adaptive, as long as the short-term activities are tied to longer-term priorities.

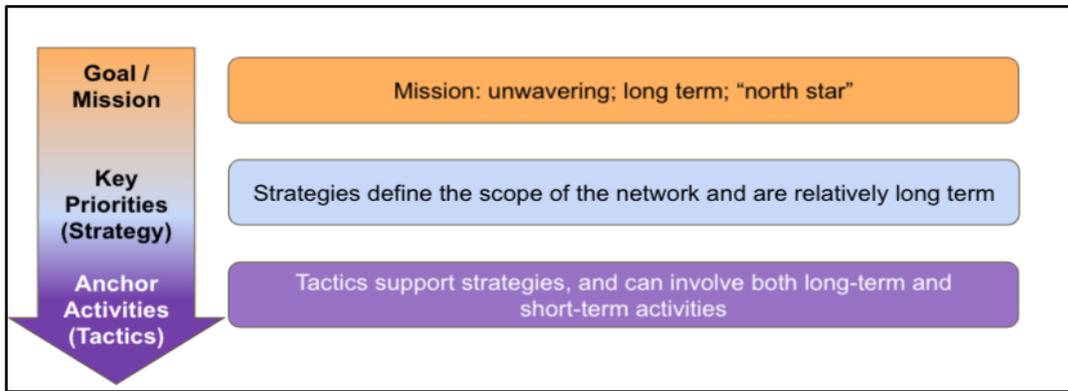


Figure 3: Goals, Priorities, and Activities framework. Mission informs priorities, which inform activities

Below, this framework is applied in an early sketch of the Network’s strategic framework.

- In the left column, goals inform priorities which inform activities.
- On the right column, we see that individual anchors can measure the impact of their activities, which feed into collective goals set by the Network. These goals contribute over time to long-term population metrics.
- In the center is an early sketch of the Network’s mission, priorities and core activities.

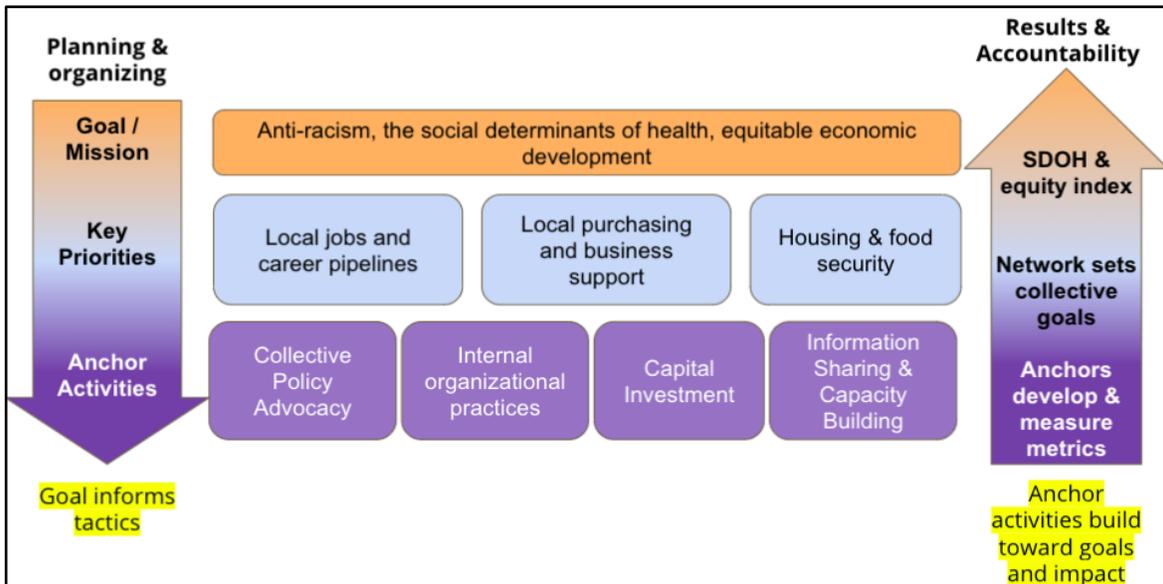


Figure 4: Early sketch of Network Strategic Framework. A clear, collective goal creates an ecosystem for anchors to contribute in a variety of ways.

Interviews also illuminated additional considerations which were incorporated into the strategic framework:

**Design criteria:**

- **Simple:** Just structured enough to facilitate the work, but not so structured it stifles the work
- **Consensus-based:** Continued co-creation by anchor institutions of what the Network is and does

**Other considerations:**

- Regular **virtual meetings** to make participation accessible
- Occasional **in-person retreats** for planning, and to strengthen relationships
- Clarity about who should be involved, and how to include various **levels of decision making** at each institution

## Section 2: Tacoma Anchor Network Strategic Framework

### Tacoma Anchor Network Mission Statement

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### Core Anchor Activities

#### Shifting Operational Dollars and Practices:

Examine and adapt business and workplace practices at all levels in order to create a lasting shift toward a culture of racial equity.

#### Coordinated Investments:

Align capital investments, grant making, or in-kind investments of staff resources or infrastructure to positively influence the Equity Index and social determinants of health.

#### Collective Policy Advocacy:

Advocate to policy-making bodies in order to advance the adoption of successful practices and strategies the Network is piloting, and/or remove barriers to adopting practices that are more equitable.

#### Information Sharing and Mutual Support:

Communicating across organizations to respond to emerging needs more quickly; share success and failures that can support each other’s learning and growth; and normalize transparency and openness between organizations.

## Clarifying Network Membership

Tacoma's anchor institutions recognize that collaboration is essential in order to achieve lasting change. Defining the identity and scope of this Network facilitates more meaningful collaboration with other organizations and groups by making it clear what the Network has to offer and, conversely, what support the Network might need. The purpose of defining the Network is not to create exclusivity. The participant mix of the Network will likely fluctuate over time. Here are some characteristics of members and non-member partners that might be useful to keep in mind:

**Anchor Network Members:** Anchor Network member institutions are Tacoma's large place-based public, non-profit or municipal institutions who have committed to collaborate with the intention of advancing the Network's goals and dedicate staff time and other resources to that effort.

**Partners:** Partners can engage with the Network in many ways that support the goals of the Network. A local foundation may be a partner in terms of sharing resources or making connections. A workforce intermediary may be a valuable partner for developing and scaling a workforce training program. Private businesses may be partners in local procurement initiatives. Similarly, chambers, advocacy groups, and other networks will be invaluable partners from time to time. Partnerships should be welcomed within the work of the Tacoma Anchor Network. However, partners' involvement may be focused on a specific topic or working group, rather than the core meetings of the Network.

## Network Roles

There are several distinct roles which are each critical to the functioning of the Network.

- **Backbone Organization:** The core support staff for the Network responsible for facilitating the collaborative process and supporting consensus and decision making; keeping an eye on the core priorities of the Network and keeping equity at the center of the work; coordinating data collection and sharing it with the Network to inform decision making and learning; coordinating communications both within the Network and externally; building relationships and co-ownership with the community to help inform decisions and priorities
- **Core Anchor Champions:** The primary point of contact to liaise between the Network and their respective anchor institution. This person (or group of people) regularly attends monthly Network meetings, and formally or informally coordinates with other staff within their institution that may be participating in working groups, etc.
- **Executive Leaders:** Key decision makers at each anchor institution. These individuals primarily engage with the Network through bi-annual leadership summits and regular communication with their Core Anchor Champion.
- **Working Group Co-Chairs:** Each working group will have two co-chairs selected from among the group participants. Co-chairs hold the working group's intent; encourage participation from the appropriate stakeholders (from within and outside of the Network); facilitate engagement of the working group both during meetings and in follow-up tasks between meetings; and communicate with the Network regarding successes, challenges, and other requests and updates. Co-chairs should regularly attend monthly Network meetings for the purpose of information sharing.
- **Community Partners / Subject Matter Experts / Advisors:** Either anchor institution staff or outside partners, these are the individuals with expertise or experience relevant to a specific goal, initiative, or priority area of the Network. Such partners might attend monthly meetings on an ad hoc basis as related to their work, but will primarily engage with the Network through working groups.

## Description of Network Convenings and Their Purposes

Monthly Network Meetings	Bi-Annual Working Retreats	Bi-Annual Leadership Summit	Working Groups Organized Around Specific Projects
<p><b>Purpose</b> Information sharing, accountability, relationship building</p> <p><b>Format</b> Virtual 1.5 - 2 hours</p> <p><b>Ideal Participant</b> Regular participation of core anchor champions who are actively engaged as points of contact from each institution</p> <p>Occasional participation of executive leaders, subject matter experts, and other decision makers connected to the work</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b> Setting or refining goals; providing feedback to working groups; celebrating progress; reflecting on obstacles and setbacks; prioritizing areas of work; and workshopping ideas in real time together</p> <p><b>Format</b> In person once we're able Half or full day</p> <p><b>Ideal Participant</b> Champions and points of contact from each institution; participants from working groups; subject matter experts and decision makers relevant to current topics</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b> Engaging executive leaders in successes, big challenges, and key decisions of the Network</p> <p><b>Format</b> Lunch or breakfast meeting 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Ideal Participant</b> Regular participation from CEOs and presidents (or designated representatives) from each anchor institution; occasional participation from other leaders and decision makers within the community</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b> These groups will be structured around a specific goal (e.g. launching a career pathway program), co-chaired by working group members, and will exist as long as they are needed to fulfil their scope of work.</p> <p><b>Format</b> Ad hoc and unique to each group; generally 1 - 2 meetings per month, with additional work between meetings</p> <p><b>Ideal Participant</b> Relevant anchor staff, decision makers, and other partners and subject matter experts</p>

## Example Cadence of Meetings for a Year

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Monthly anchor meeting		Monthly anchor meeting								
						Bi-Annual Working Retreat					
						Bi-Annual Leadership Summit					
Working groups pursue initiatives and projects identified in working retreat, and share progress at following working retreat						Working groups pursue initiatives and projects identified in working retreat, and share progress at following working retreat					

Working Retreats & Leadership Summits are complimentary. Holding the Leadership Summits shortly after Working Retreats can provide an opportunity for executives to remain up to date on the latest work of the Network, and provide a “green light” for the work plans that the Network has developed for the next six months.

**An Important Note About Community Engagement:** To date, the City of Tacoma has played the primary role of community engagement for the Network. Initially, through the 2025 Strategic Planning process, and more recently, through community-focused efforts such as Heal the Heart of Tacoma,<sup>4</sup> City staff have dedicated time and energy to bringing the community’s voice into the conversation. In the long-term, the Network will need to consider what it would like its own relationship with the community to be. Some ideas about this are included in Section 4.

## Section 3: Collaborative Decision Making

The Tacoma Anchor Network is committed to consensus-based decision making. **Consensus is an actively facilitated process, and a key role for the Network’s backbone organization.** The cadence of Network meetings is designed to work harmoniously with the consensus process. Regular monthly meetings and working group meetings provide opportunity for continuous updates, learning, and real-time decisions and adjustments to the work as the Network responds to current events and context. Bi-annual gatherings provide the space to pause and look at a longer time horizon, to make sure the Network is heading in the right direction, and to make bigger strategic decisions together. The Network will use the guidelines below to make decisions, and it is likely that these guidelines will continue to develop over time.

### Gradients of Agreement

The Network will use the gradients of agreement<sup>5</sup> (or similar tools) for decision making. This tool helps groups identify areas of alignment and disagreement much more effectively than a binary “yes / no” voting process and helps to illuminate conversations that the Network needs to have in order to find agreement.

1	2	3	4	5	6
This poses a problem for moving forward together.	This makes no sense to me.  This contradicts how I was seeing things.	Meh [shrug].  I’m not opposed, but I’m not sure about this either.	We still have some work to do, but it’s good enough for now!	This will work well. I like where we are going with this.  This resonates with me.	Wow! This is so great!  This reflects all my hopes and dreams.

<sup>4</sup> Heal the Heart of Tacoma aims to spark long term change that strengthens and heals communities, provide the foundation necessary to achieve greater equity in service delivery, and increase trust in local institutions. For more information about Heal the Heart of Tacoma, please see: [https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city\\_departments/City\\_Managers\\_Office/transforming\\_tacoma/heal\\_the\\_heart](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/City_Managers_Office/transforming_tacoma/heal_the_heart)

<sup>5</sup> Gradients of Agreement was used widely throughout this strategic planning process and is adapted from [Sam Kaner. The Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision Making \(San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2014\)](#). The Guide is a comprehensive resource on group decision making, elaborating further on the nuances of big decisions, little decisions, strong agreement, weak agreement, splits of opinion, and more. It is an exceptional resource for anyone in a backbone facilitation role.

## Decision Making Guidelines and Examples:

Each decision the Network makes will be unique, and it will be the responsibility of the backbone organization or working group chairs to facilitate the decision-making process. Here are a few guidelines and examples to help navigate different scenarios.

- Be clear about the proposal or question that the group is deciding on. Write it on a slide or flip chart, and make sure clarifying questions have been asked before voting or polling.
- Be clear about the level of consensus necessary to move the decision forward.
- For major decisions, the Network will seek a majority of 5s or above in order to move forward.
- For ideas that are actively evolving and developing, a majority of 3s and 4s will be sufficient to move forward, so long as concerns are understood and there is a plan to address them.
- The Network will not move forward with a decision if there are any votes of 1 or 2. In such a scenario, the backbone organization will work to understand and address questions or concerns. This may require additional conversations before returning to a group vote.

Given that the Network is aligned around shared priorities, significant disagreement *should* be rare. In the event of significant disagreements, the Network should stop and consider if it is moving outside of its original scope, or if there are un-named agendas, priorities or tensions at work. In either event, this will raise important conversations for the Network. It is ok (and even expected!) that the Network will evolve over time. Gradients of agreement can help raise awareness of critical conversations and ensure that the Network is evolving together.

**Example A** illustrates strong agreement. The facilitator can interpret a vote like this as consensus to move forward with an idea or proposal.

1	2	3	4	5	6
			II	III	III

**Example B** also shows consensus to move forward but tells us that there are a few details or nuances that need to be figured out along the way. The facilitator should consider building in more frequent check-ins along the way to ensure things keep moving in the right direction and critical questions are addressed.

1	2	3	4	5	6
		III	IIII	I	I

**Example C** includes 1s and 2s, indicating some significant disagreement. This is a sign that more discussion is needed before moving forward. In this case, the facilitator's role is to draw out the questions and concerns behind the disagreement and work to a solution that moves those up to at least a 3 (this may require additional 1-1 conversations and group meetings). Once concerns have been addressed, the Network should proceed as in example B, making time and space to check in as the work unfolds.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I	II	I	II	III	I

**Example D** shows lukewarm enthusiasm. While there are no objections, a vote like this might provide a good opportunity to pause and consider if the proposed idea is really worth the Network's time.

1	2	3	4	5	6
		IIII	IIII		

## Naming the Conversation<sup>6</sup>

Clear communication about when, how and why decisions are being made in the Network is an important function of the backbone facilitator. The following framework supports facilitators in alleviating some of the ambiguity that can come with collaboration by being clear about what type of meeting or conversation is taking place.

### **Orienting and Information Sharing:**

This involves setting the agenda and facilitating dialogue to ensure the Network is developing a **shared awareness of important issues**. The backbone organization will seek input on monthly meeting agendas, provide space for updates and conversation between members, and strive to include all voices. Members can also play a role in advocating for and supporting each other in raising important issues.

### **Choice and Decision Making:**

This is a conversation when the purpose is to decide to **take action or allocate time and resources to issues together** (i.e., setting a goal, forming a working group, deciding on a policy agenda, etc.). The backbone organization and co-chairs should be clear in naming when a collective decision is being made as opposed to where only information sharing or brainstorming is taking place. The backbone organization or co-chairs should take steps to include all relevant Network members (such as those who may not be able to attend the current meeting) in the decision-making process before finalizing a decision. It can be frustrating to re-open debate once many members feel a decision has been made, so the importance of clear communication around decisions cannot be overstated.

### **Movement and Taking Action:**

Once the Network decides to move forward with an idea, the **working group or other relevant stakeholders championing that work should feel empowered to take action and move the work forward** with the expectation that they will consistently share updates with the Network on progress, roadblocks, new opportunities or challenges that arise, etc.

## Section 4: Next Steps in 2021

This section outlines the next steps for the Network at the conclusion of the 2021 strategic planning process, including initial working groups and plans for developing long-term backbone capacity.

### Initial Working Groups

In May 2021, the Network aligned around four initial working groups. The goal is to achieve some measurable successes in 2021, lay the groundwork for future working groups through data analysis, and strengthen the Network's backbone capacity. Throughout the summer of 2021, these groups will clarify their goals and report to the Network on their progress as they move forward.

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<sup>6</sup> The Naming the Conversation framework has been crafted to address the ideas and context of the Tacoma Anchor Network, yet many of the concepts have roots in Gestalt Organization and Systems Development Theory -- particularly a concept called "stages of development". For those interested in further exploring this and other Gestalt concepts, please see [John Carter & Gestalt OSD Center. \*Making a Difference with your Presence\* \(Aitkin, MN: River Place Press, 2019\)](#)

- **Healthcare Apprenticeship Pathways:** In partnership with the National League of Cities and Workforce Central, the Network will develop pathways for healthcare careers and apprenticeships focused on addressing barriers to workforce participation for low and no-income residents.
- **Local Procurement Landscape\*:** In partnership with Emerald Cities Collaborative (ECC) and Health Care Without Harm (HWH) , the Network will analyze the economic impact of local anchor institutions, with the goal of sharing baseline data with the community and identifying opportunities for local procurement and investment together.
- **Addressing Affordable Housing:** The Network will survey the landscape of opportunities for anchor institutions to invest in development of affordable housing in Tacoma with the goal of identifying an impactful project in 2021.
- **Organizational Capacity:** The Network will explore funding and resource needs to adequately support collaboration in the coming years.

\*The ECC/HWH data analysis will conclude with community engagement and workshopping. This will be a good opportunity for the Network to develop its own relationship with the broader community and will likely point to opportunities for continued collaboration and shared leadership with community members.

## Backbone Organization Capacity Roadmap

Backbone organizational capacity is a foundational element of collaboration<sup>7</sup>. In the course of this planning process, many Network members acknowledged the increasing amount of time and backbone capacity that would be necessary in order to help the Tacoma Anchor Network reach its full potential.

The following roadmap outlines a transition plan to shift from the current part-time allocation of City staff support to a fully resourced backbone organization for the initiative. The plan proposes the establishment of backbone capacity that is somewhat independent from the City so that the City can more fully take on the role of an anchor member, rather than wearing the dual hats of facilitator and Network member.

<b>Current State</b> City Providing Backbone Facilitation	<b>Short-Term Transitional State</b> (3 - 6 months) City Providing Backbone Facilitation With Increased Capacity	<b>Longer-Term Transitional State</b> (6 - 18 months) Full-Time Staffing for Backbone Facilitation	<b>Ideal Future State</b> (1-2 years from now) Independent or Semi-Independent Backbone Organization
City staff dedicate a percentage of time to Network coordination	City staff time supplemented by contractor capacity while a full-time role is developed	One full-time Network coordinator/director funded by the City, and possibility of co-chair leadership model or advisory committee to support backbone for the initiative	One or more full-time staff funded collectively by Network members and/or grant dollars; City transitions out of backbone facilitation role and participates fully as a Network member

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of foundational elements of collective impact initiatives, including the role of the backbone organization, please see: [Spark Policy Institute & ORSImpact. When Collective Impact has an Impact. \(2018\)](#)

# Appendix

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Anchor Institutions:** Organizations that are rooted in place, have significant investments in a community, and are highly unlikely to relocate or disinvest from the community in which they are located
- **Equity:** When everyone has access to the opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their well-being, and achieve their full potential
- **Procurement:** The sourcing of goods and services used by anchor institutions (This includes supplies, materials, foods, and contracted services. Capital expenditures such as construction and infrastructure projects can also fall under the category of procurement, though they are often managed and measured separately.)
- **Investment:** A wide range of financial and operational resources (e.g., cash and cash equivalents, fixed-income debt investments, equity investments, real estate, and infrastructure) that can be leveraged in the short- and long-term to positively impact the community.<sup>8</sup>
- **Workforce pipeline:** Intentionally connected education and support services to help individuals find their way into living wage jobs and careers (Pipelines can include apprenticeship, internship, and mentorship programs; partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and employers around specific skills and jobs; wrap-around services such as childcare, career coaching, and tuition assistance for employees; guaranteed placement for graduates of workforce training programs; and much more.)
- **Anti-racism:** Dedication and commitment to comprehensive and sustained transformation of all of the institutions, systems, policies, practices, and contracts impacted by systemic racism.<sup>9</sup>
- **Social determinants of health:** The conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes<sup>10</sup> (These include social and economic factors such as education, income, family and social support, neighborhood environment, community safety, and access to services.)

## Stakeholders Engaged

*The following people participated in 1-1 or small group interviews as part of the strategic planning process, in addition to regular participation in monthly meetings and feedback sessions.*

**Douglas Baxter-Jenkins**, Community Integration Program Manager, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health  
**Lois Bernstein**, Chief Community Executive, MultiCare  
**Patsy Best**, Procurement and Payables, City of Tacoma  
**Gary Buchanan**, Former Director of Human Resources, City of Tacoma  
**Andy Cherullo**, Director of Finance, City of Tacoma  
**Kenny Coble**, Community Engagement Coordinator, Media and Communications, City of Tacoma

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on collaborative, place-based investing, please see: [Shena Ashley and Joycelyn Ovalle, Investing Together: Emerging Approaches in Collaborative Place-Based Impact Investing, \(Urban Institute 2018\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> For more information on Tacoma's work around anti-racism, please see: City of Tacoma. "City Council Passes Resolution Affirming the City of Tacoma's Commitment to Anti- Racist Systems Transformation" Press Release, June 30, 2020. [https://www.cityoftacoma.org/in\\_the\\_news/anti\\_racist\\_systems\\_transformation](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/in_the_news/anti_racist_systems_transformation)

<sup>10</sup> Definition taken from "About Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 10, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/about.html>.

**Jacques Colon**, Tacoma 2025 Strategic Manager, City of Tacoma  
**Kat Flores**, Human Resources Analyst, City of Tacoma  
**Hunter George**, Chief Communications and Public Affairs Officer, Metro Parks Tacoma  
**Ashley Johnson**, Office Administrator, City of Tacoma  
**Tanisha Jumper**, Media and Communications Director, City of Tacoma  
**Lori Keller**, Dean of Instruction, Bates Technical College  
**Alicia Lawver**, Strategic Program Analyst (WMBE Construction contracting), Tacoma Public Schools  
**Alexandra Mather**, Government & Community Relations Officer, Pierce Transit  
**Peter Mayer**, Deputy Executive Director, Metro Parks Tacoma  
**Michael Mirra**, Executive Director, Tacoma Housing Authority  
**Ali Modarres**, Dean of School of Urban Studies / Assistant Chancellor for Community Engagement, University of Washington Tacoma  
**Mark Pagano**, Chancellor, University of Washington Tacoma  
**Bill Ryberg**, Vice President for College Advancement and Director of Foundation, Tacoma Community College  
**Rose Shandrow**, Director Mission Operation and Spiritual Care, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health  
**Collette Stewart**, Director of Human Resources, Tacoma Public Schools  
**Kristina Walker**, Council Member, City of Tacoma

*The following people engaged with the planning process through monthly meetings and/or feedback sessions*

**Kathi Littmann**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Greater Tacoma Community Foundation  
**John Hickey**, Executive Director of Community Engagement and Associate Vice President for Business Services, University of Puget Sound  
**Jeff Robinson**, Director of Community and Economic Development, City of Tacoma  
**Carla Santorno**, Superintendent, Tacoma Public Schools