

## **Mission Forward: Frequently Asked Questions – Last Updated 8/25/23**

### **Q: What is Mission Forward?**

**A:** Mission Forward is UW Medicine’s systemwide initiative to identify, design and implement changes that improve our financial stability, increase operational efficiency, promote the well-being of our staff, faculty and trainees, and ensure we can continue providing high-quality, equitable patient care to our community.

### **Q: How serious is the financial situation facing UW Medicine and what are the key drivers?**

**A:** The financial situation for UW Medicine’s three hospitals – UW Medical Center (UWMC) Harborview Medical Center (HMC) and Valley Medical Center (VMC) – is serious. In fiscal year 2023, excluding Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recovery funds and \$50 million in appropriations from the Washington Legislature, UWMC lost \$41 million and HMC lost \$22 million. The financial forecast for the current fiscal year (FY24) indicates another challenging year, with losses of \$114 million projected at UWMC and \$63 million at HMC. While healthcare systems nationally and across the state are experiencing similar difficulties, UW Medicine’s financial performance is exacerbated by our unique role in the region:

- Our mission is to provide care for all people, including the most vulnerable and most complex patients, resulting in over \$800 million in undercompensated care per year.
- We train over 65% of the residents in Washington state. However, the reimbursement for resident education has been capped since 1996.
- We have continued to invest in contract labor to meet the clinical needs of our state while other healthcare systems have reduced their staffing and are not using all their physical beds.
- We have over 175 patients in our system on any given day who are medically ready to be discharged to the next level of care but remain in our hospitals due to the lack of post-acute care availability; reimbursement covers only about 17% of their hospital care.

### **Q: What are the guiding principles of Mission Forward?**

**A:** Across our system, Mission Forward work is being guided by the following principles:

- **Ensure the continuation** of high-quality, equitable patient care to our community.
- **Achieve systemness** and operational efficiencies in aligning leadership, leveraging economies of scale, sharing resources and functions, as well as creating single points of accountability and connection across UW Medicine.
- **Promote the well-being** of our staff, faculty and trainees.
- **Engage stakeholders** and be transparent, including faculty, staff, trainees, governing boards, UW leadership, policy makers and labor partners.
- **Be innovative** in our approach to drive sustainable, affordable and quality results.

### **Q: What are the phases of Mission Forward?**

**A:** Mission Forward is divided into three phases:

- **Phase 1: Assess and Identify [COMPLETED]**. Gather information, analyze data, conduct stakeholder interviews and benchmark to inform short-, mid-, and long-term opportunities that feed into an assessment report. We completed this work in May 2023. A summary of the report can be found [here](#).
- **Phase 2: Decide and Design [COMPLETED]**. Validate the assessment report, develop a briefing schedule for key stakeholders to get alignment, design solutions and identify implementation teams. We completed this work in June 2023.

- **Phase 3: Implement and Achieve.** Implement workstreams and process solutions for sustaining change and measuring success. We are well underway in this phase with two dozen workstreams now active systemwide.

**Q: What workstreams have launched as part of Phase 3?**

**A:** Active workstreams as of August 2023, are focused on the following areas for improvement. Leaders of each workstream are directing the implementation of FY24 plans, reporting on their progress and working with their teams to create strategies to pursue over the next 2-5 years:

- Care Delivery – Length of Stay
- Care Delivery – Perioperative
- Care Delivery – Emergency Department
- Care Delivery – Workforce Inpatient Nursing, Ancillary, Support
- Revenue Cycle – Hospital
- Revenue Cycle – Physician
- Revenue Cycle – Payor Contracting
- Document & Coding Excellence – Inpatient Clinical Document Integrity & Coding
- Document & Coding Excellence – Professional Services E&M
- Document & Coding Excellence – Risk Adjustment
- Health System Workforce Foundational Elements
- Operations Model / Span of Control
- Retention & Leader Development
- Information Technology
- Supply Chain
- Clinic Efficiencies & Access, and Provider Productivity
- School of Medicine Faculty Effort
- Medical Directorships
- Quality & Safety
- Space Utilization

**Q: How are you coordinating and managing all this work simultaneously?**

**A:** First, each workstream has been specifically designed to support key priority areas identified in the assessment. Leaders of those workstreams have written charters for their teams, defined their success metrics and are reporting regularly on their progress.

Second, we have also formed a strategic taskforce to focus on key strategies to pursue over the next 2-5 years. The taskforce will explore topics such as our systemwide financial alignment, optimal scale, strategic partnerships, access and capacity, additional funding sources and service-line growth.

**Q: Who is involved in the workstreams?**

**A:** Most workstreams are being overseen by UW Medicine leaders with strategic input and guidance from Huron consultants. The number of people involved in each workstream will vary depending on the stage and scope of that workstream.

**Q: Is Mission Forward making a difference?**

**A:** Yes. In fiscal year 2023, preliminary numbers suggest more than **\$80 million in benefit** from Mission Forward. This was largely because of improvements in revenue cycle, increased surgical volumes and admissions, reduction in reliance on contract labor and decreases in lengths of stay. We must achieve another \$100 million in targeted benefits from Mission Forward in FY24 to support our budget projections.

**Q: What was the 90-day action plan?**

**A:** The 90-day action plan was our plan to bring structured focus to a select number of high-priority areas, while still preserving UW Medicine’s high standard of care. The plan, which started in mid-December 2022 and concluded in March 2023, built on existing improvement areas and enabled us to make meaningful progress leading into Phases 2 and 3 of Mission Forward.

**Q: What were the results of the 90-day action plan?**

**A:** The 90-day action plan generated positive results across our system. A summary can be found [here](#). Many of the workstreams started as part of the 90-day action plan have continued in Phase 3 of Mission Forward.

**Q: How long will Mission Forward last?**

**A:** We know it will take time to make meaningful, long-term changes to our operations, structures, and ways we approach our work. We expect Mission Forward to be a multi-year initiative. Some improvements are already being realized. Others may take many more months to see results. This will require continued support from the University of Washington, the State, and King County to ensure UW Medicine is positioned to deliver on its mission.

**Q: How will this work impact me?**

**A:** How much direct impact you experience from Mission Forward may vary depending on your role within the organization. During Phase 3 Implementation, which is now well underway, workstream leaders are actively communicating with employees whose roles and responsibilities intersect with priority areas. You may be asked to provide input, learn new tools or processes and/or make adjustments to certain aspects of your work routine. We acknowledge that all this change can feel overwhelming, so we will do this work together, supporting each other and the well-being of our UW Medicine community.

**Q: Are layoffs or furloughs planned at this time?**

**A:** Our ability to achieve our mission depends on the talent and dedication of our faculty, staff and trainees. As part of Mission Forward, we are evaluating all opportunities for us to be more efficient, productive, and financially sustainable. These assessments may lead to targeted layoffs. UW Medicine makes all staffing decisions with the utmost care and in accordance with applicable law, policies, procedures and collective bargaining agreements. We will work to retain impacted employees within UW Medicine whenever possible.

**Q: Does Mission Forward include Valley Medical Center?**

**A:** No. However, Valley Medical Center has a similar initiative underway called Operation Ascend, which they launched last year. Both Mission Forward and Operation Ascend share the same long-term objective to provide high-quality, equitable care to our community for years to come. Our operational teams are coordinated and sharing best practices and key learnings.

**Q: When will additional information be provided?**

**A:** We are committed to providing our community with frequent and transparent communication on Mission Forward. We will continue to provide updates for the community through various standing meetings, town halls, email messages and the [Mission Forward Huddle page](#), which includes a project overview, these frequently asked questions, previous Mission Forward messages to our full community, presentations showing recent progress and links to related work at UW Medicine, among other resources.

**Q: How can I contribute?**

**A:** Our strength as an integrated clinical, research and learning health system comes from the contributions of each person who is part of UW Medicine, and we will need everyone’s help to



ensure UW Medicine is positioned for future success. If you have feedback on Mission Forward, please send it to [ideas4mf@uw.edu](mailto:ideas4mf@uw.edu).

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