Healthy Living Collaborative of Southwest Washington leads the way in creating a cross-sector, community-based data system to help providers and organizations better understand the needs of their communities.

When a patient goes to the doctor’s office, medical records only show part of their story. At-risk populations are often facing complex health conditions, behavioral health issues, and other issues that are made worse by housing instability, food insecurity, unemployment, and more.

To ensure that providers are more connected to their communities and the needs of at-risk populations, Healthy Living Collaborative (HLC) of Southwest Washington partnered with PeaceHealth, a not-for-profit health care system, and other local partners to form the Connections Workgroup.

The goal of the workgroup is to put communities at the heart of clinical care and health system reform—to make them active partners, rather than targets, of that reform.

The workgroup brings together the health care, public health, community services, criminal justice, education, and housing sectors to build a system of data sharing that would help to fill in the gaps about patients and their circumstances. By having this missing information, providers can give better care to their patients across Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, and Wahkiakum Counties.

In addition, this cross-sector data system would tell organizations, such as HLC, and health care systems where to invest and what interventions will have the greatest impact.

Building a Community-Based Data System

To build this complex data system, HLC is partnering with Providence Center for Outcomes Research & Education, a non-profit research laboratory that has been at the forefront of similar work in Oregon.

To ensure a collaborative regional approach to building community-based data infrastructure, the HLC supported site visits with 17 multi-sector partners in Southwest Washington.
Participants shared many examples of how cross-sector data could be used to improve health interventions. (See graphic above for themes that emerged.)

**Community Health Worker Pilot**

The HLC Community Health Worker pilot that was launched in the spring of 2014 will be a key component of community-based data collection. Community Health Workers (CHWs) are non-clinical peer practitioners who have both training and life experiences that contribute to their knowledge of health issues and the health care system. They understand the social determinants of health that significantly contribute to poor health outcomes.

Healthy Living Collaborative has 30 Community Health Workers across the region working in communities with individuals and families to help improve their health. They are trusted members of the communities they serve, so they are in a unique position to engage people that professionals have difficulty reaching.

HLC’s Community Health Workers will help to define relevant data measures for the communities they work in and be at the forefront of collecting that information as the project gets off the ground.