



2026 Environmental Scan: Key Takeaways

Source: <https://www.aha.org/environmentalscan>



Care Delivery Is Being Redistributed

Healthcare delivery is increasingly defined by *where* care occurs, not just where hospitals are located. By 2035, outpatient volumes are projected to grow **18%**, with home-based services expanding **32%**, reinforcing the need for care models — and leadership structures — that extend beyond the traditional inpatient setting.



Financial Pressure Is Structural

Hospital margin pressure is no longer cyclical. Medicaid reimburses hospitals just **\$0.58 for every \$1.00** spent caring for Medicaid patients, underscoring persistent structural strain that is driving greater emphasis on scale, efficiency, and disciplined operational leadership across health systems.



Workforce Demand Beyond the Numbers

The AHA's 2026 Environmental Scan signals a clear shift from short-term staffing fixes to **strategic workforce solutions**. Demographic pressure and evolving workforce expectations are prompting health system leaders to redesign talent models and invest in **new, sustainable pipelines of both frontline and leadership talent** aligned with changing care delivery needs.



Technology Is Becoming Infrastructure

Digital tools are now embedded in core hospital operations. **75% of hospitals offer telehealth**, reflecting a move from pilot programs to scaled deployment and increasing demand for leaders who can integrate technology into clinical, operational, and workforce workflows.



Demand Is Rising and Evolving

Population aging continues to reshape healthcare demand. Adults **65 and older now exceed 61 million**, driving higher acuity, increased utilization, and greater complexity — while reinforcing the need for coordinated, patient-centered care delivery across settings.

Bottom Line

The AHA's 2026 Environmental Scan portrays a healthcare delivery system under sustained pressure — but **actively recalibrating**. Success will depend on aligning leadership, workforce strategy, and operating models with where and how care is increasingly delivered.

HIGHLIGHTED PLACEMENTS

ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER

Chair,
Anesthesia

ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER

Chair,
Vascular Surgery



Vice President,
Laboratory Services



Chief Operating
Officer



Chief Executive
Officer

Southern Pines Surgery Center

ASC
Administrator



VP, Quality Service,
Excellence, & Value



Chief Executive
Officer

[See more of our sample placements and client partners here.](#)

LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

HEALTHCARE LAYOFFS ARE RISING
LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT MUST RISE FASTER

Healthcare layoffs continue to rise — from 350 at Tower Health, to 572 at Optum, 300 at PacificSource, and 650 at Jefferson Health — as systems and payers navigate tightening margins, reimbursement pressure, and operational cost increases... [Read more.](#)

Healthcare HR and TA teams aren't just supporting growth. They are SHAPING it!

Human Resources and Talent Acquisition teams influence far more than most people realize. They are not just "support functions." They are strategic engines... [Read more.](#)

EVENT TRACKER: WHERE WE'RE ENGAGING & WHY IT MATTERS

Will you be in the area? Let's schedule a time to meet! Email me at kylek@slonepartners.com

February 2026 | [HRO Today People in Healthcare Summit](#)

Arizona

- Engaging with senior HR and Talent Acquisition leaders from across the country to exchange perspectives on leadership readiness, workforce strategy, and executive hiring in a rapidly evolving healthcare environment.
- Reinforcing Slone Partners' relationship-driven approach to understanding how healthcare organizations are preparing leaders for growth, disruption, and transformation.

March 2026 | [Pennsylvania Organization of Nursing Leaders \(PONL\) – Spring Summit](#)

Featured Speaker (Returning)

Philadelphia, PA

- Sharing perspective on hiring, recruiting, and leadership preparedness from the vantage point of a **retained executive search firm** working closely with healthcare and nursing leaders nationwide.
- Offering practical insight into how leadership readiness and hiring decisions intersect—and where organizations most often misjudge risk at the point of hire.

May 2026 | [LEAP HR: Healthcare](#)

Featured Speaker

Nashville, TN

- Contributing to a national, healthcare-specific forum of CHROs and senior HR leaders focused on translating people strategy into measurable recruiting and retention outcomes.
- Presenting **Leading Through Change: How Leadership Readiness Shapes Recruiting & Retention Outcomes**, highlighting why leadership readiness has become the determining factor during sustained change.

LET'S CONNECT



Kyle Kinzie

President & Partner, Hospitals & Healthcare Delivery Solutions

kylek@slonepartners.com

<https://slonepartners.com/who-we-serve/hospitals-health-solutions>