

Frequently Asked Questions A Potential Partnership for Valley General Hospital

What is happening at Valley General Hospital?

Valley General Hospital is evaluating ways to enhance health care services for the community. Many other small, community hospitals have accessed additional resources, and broadened the range of health care services they provide patients by partnering with other health care organizations. As a result, Valley General has issued a "Request for Proposals" to see if there is an organization that shares our mission, vision and values.

Why is Valley General issuing an RFP?

Larger health care organizations have access to resources that smaller systems do not. Many small district hospitals, like Valley General, are seeking strategic partnerships now to provide their communities with more comprehensive health care in the future. A partnership could help us respond to new federal programs, access new resources, continue to care for vulnerable populations, and increase opportunities to recruit and retain skilled medical staff.

What does Valley General want from a potential partner?

We want a partner that shares our mission, vision and values, which includes providing health care services in east Snohomish County and continuing our long-standing commitment to our community.

What does Valley General bring to a potential partnership?

Valley General is in a good position to attract a potential partner. We have improved cost-efficiencies while exceeding goals in every measured category of patient care for federal reporting requirements. We serve one of the fastest growing areas in the state, which could increase the need for health care services. Our community now and those who will move here deserve access to a broader range of health care services than Valley General may be able to provide on its own.

What is the timeline for this potential partnership?

Valley General issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in early February 2011. Proposals are to be submitted by the beginning of March. The proposals, as well as the possibility of maintaining Valley General as a standalone facility, will be evaluated over two months at which point a non-binding letter of intent could be signed with one, or even two other systems. At that point, both Valley General and the potential partner would spend a few more months determining if this was a good fit.

How could a public hospital partner with another organization?

Public district hospitals are allowed to affiliate or partner with other public or nonprofit entities under Washington law. RCW 70.44 grants a public hospital's Board of Commissioners authority to approve a strategic partnership of this kind.

Would we still be a public hospital?

Many other small, community hospitals have gone through this process and still maintained their public status. Others have chosen different business models. It is hard to predict what our partnership will look like at this time. We will do what is in the best interest of our patients and the community.

What will happen to those who are uninsured and require health care?

A strategic partnership would bring new opportunities and resources to help us continue to care for vulnerable populations that rely on Valley General for service.

What if no proposals are received?

Valley General began a thorough operations improvement process a year ago. It made needed changes in restructuring the organization and improving the quality of patient care. We will continue to look for ways to make our organization more efficient. However, industry demands and economic forces will make it necessary to revisit the idea of a potential partnership in the future. This will be important in the long-run to provide current and contemporary health care for the community, which it deserves.

How will this affect employment at the hospital or in east Snohomish County?

Employment in any organization fluctuates with demand. Valley General staffing levels meet current standards for patient care. A strategic partnership has the potential to bring new opportunities for employment growth to our area.

What other hospitals have formed partnerships in the past year?

Many hospitals, including district hospitals like Valley General, are creating alliances with other organizations to enhance health care services. Valley Medical in Renton is evaluating an alliance with the University of Washington Medicine. Swedish and Stevens Hospital in Edmonds are working together. Southwest in Vancouver partnered with PeaceHealth. Enumclaw Regional Hospital has partnered with Franciscan Health System, and Good Samaritan in Puyallup merged with MultiCare of Tacoma.

What do Valley General doctors and nurses think of this idea?

Our medical staff is optimistic about a potential partnership and the benefits it can provide their patients, as well as professional development opportunities for themselves. A partnership could provide resources to access the workspace, equipment, technology, and specialists that they want for patient care.

Will this process affect the level of health care service currently provided by Valley General?

Quality patient care and access to health care services will continue. If we find a suitable partner, we would expect to broaden the range of health care services we offer to provide more comprehensive care for the community.

How will this process affect the quality of care we receive from Valley General?

In the past 12 months, Valley General has exceeded goals in every measured category of patient care for federal reporting requirements. This level of care will not be interrupted by these discussions. In fact, it's one of the things that make Valley General attractive to a potential partner.

Is the decision to seek a partnership based on finances?

Valley General is no different than many small public hospitals that want to continue to provide community-based care. Larger health care organizations have access to resources that we do not. While this is a concern, it's not what is driving our decision to seek a strategic partnership. The primary reason is to provide current and contemporary health care that our community deserves.

How can the community follow this process?

Valley General will provide regular updates to the community through news releases and its website www.valleygeneral.org. There also will be public meetings to provide feedback and ask questions.