

The Southeastern Oklahoma Continuum of Care OK-507
Plan for Serving Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness
with Severe Service Needs

This plan and the strategies within were developed after gathering input from the Southeastern Oklahoma CoC (SEO CoC) members, stakeholders, and people with lived experience of homelessness, as well as analysis of CoC data from its Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Point in Time Count (PiT), Housing Inventory Count (HIC), Longitudinal Statistical Analysis (LSA), and other local sources, as well as, utilizing Stella tools.

P-1. Leveraging Housing Resources.

Special NOFO Section VII.B.4.a.

Demonstrate your CoC's efforts to increase the number of permanent housing units available.

P-1a. Development of New Units and Creation of Housing Opportunities–Leveraging Housing. (Required for Rural Set Aside). Special NOFO Section VII.B.4.a.1.

Please see the Leveraging Housing Commitment uploaded to the Attachments screen.

P-1b. Development of New Units and Creation of Housing Opportunities–PHA Commitment. (Required for Rural Set Aside) Special NOFO Section VII.B.4.a.1

Please see the PHA Commitment uploaded to the Attachments screen.

P-1c. Landlord Recruitment. (Required for Rural Set Aside) Special NOFO Section VII.B.4.a.2.

1. Describe the current strategy your CoC uses to recruit landlords, and their units, in which to use tenant-based rental assistance including:

a. Demonstrating how well this strategy works in identifying units across your CoC's entire geographic area: and

The SEO CoC consists of 21 counties in southeastern Oklahoma, most of which are extremely rural. There are very few metropolitan areas in the CoC, the largest being less than 38,000 and the second largest being less than 25,000. Consequently, the CoC currently utilizes a number of different landlord recruitment strategies. In the larger metro areas, agencies attend landlord group meetings to recruit new properties and provide information about housing programs and the supports clients receive while in the programs. Additionally, landlords are engaged to provide feedback to other landlords in attendance regarding their past experiences with the housing programs.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program uses similar strategies and, through their strategic plan, is developing a program-wide landlord engagement strategy. SSVF has a landlord appreciation process that recognizes landlords, property managers, and property companies that support Veterans with certificates of appreciation and new this year will be the

use of challenge coins. They have also allocated 50% of one full time employee to serve as a housing specialist to work with current and potential landlords for recruitment and retention, as well as housing placement.

All CoC housing programs maintain landlord databases or lists to ensure program participants have rapid access to permanent housing from the moment they enter the program. Programs also work with Chambers of Commerce and City Halls to stay up to date on new landlords and property managers. Housing case managers are continually developing relationships with current and prospective landlords. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) programs are regularly searching for new landlords in many of the same ways any prospective tenants would look for housing; by word of mouth, through classified ads, websites, and “For Rent” signs in targeted areas. In rural areas, relationship building has been the most successful strategy in landlord recruitment.

The CoC engages and works with several Public Housing Authorities (PHA) in the area and is currently “in talks” with additional PHA’s to prioritize literally homeless persons for their Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) and Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs). CoC agencies regularly partner with tribal rental assistance programs to ensure Native Americans who are homeless can quickly access housing search assistance, rental housing, and financial assistance.

b. Demonstrating how well this strategy works in identifying units in areas where the CoC has historically not been able to identify units:

Historically, this strategy has worked well for the CoC, housing 463 households (815 people) in all types of permanent housing during the 12 month period from 07/01/2021 to 06/30/2022. However, there are simply not enough available units to meet the need.

2. Identify any new practice(s) your CoC has implemented to recruit landlords in the past 3 years and describe the lessons learned from implementing those practices:

The CoC signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) to provide access points for households applying for EHVs. All Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) sub-grantees along with some additional agencies served as access points and assisted households apply for EHVs and provided some additional services for the households. This worked well initially to convince landlords to lease to households experiencing homelessness. In the last six to eight months, landlords have soured on vouchers. They can rent at a higher rate to “out-priced homebuyers” and not have to meet habitability standards or rent reasonableness.

CoC agencies have recently obtained several written commitments from area property managers agreeing to give program participants “right of first refusal” when units become available. This is a new strategy for the CoC and is just now being implemented therefore, there are no lessons learned at this time.

With ESG-CV (COVID) funds, several agencies implemented landlord incentives to recruit new landlords. While the outcomes were mostly positive and, undoubtedly, helped agencies obtain housing for households with high barriers, incentives are no longer economically feasible nor an allowable expense under annual ESG funding. Key lessons learned from using landlord incentives are that, in lieu of extra money, landlords are more interested in protecting their

investment by renting to respectful tenants that understand the responsibilities that come with renting.

Moving forward, the CoC will continue to develop its current strategy and work to develop and implement new strategies. The CoC, with input from local landlords, is developing a Tenant Readiness curriculum to improve participants' chances of securing and maintaining permanent housing and prevent future evictions. Tenant Readiness education will address many common landlord concerns, such as budgeting, lack of communication, unauthorized roommates / pets, cleanliness, and damages. The CoC plans to finalize the Tenant Readiness curriculum by the end of the year, implementing it in early 2023.

3. Describe how your CoC will use data, including the specific data points that will be used, to update its landlord recruitment strategy:

The CoC will track exits to permanent housing and exits to homelessness and the utilization rates of Emergency Housing Vouchers and Stability Vouchers as well as landlord feedback surveys. The data will be used to inform and update the CoC landlord recruitment strategy.

Lived Experience Work Group Feedback: Landlords are requiring the equivalent of 2 to 3 months' worth of rent in the potential tenant's bank account to be eligible to rent a unit.

P-2. Leveraging Healthcare Resources—New PSH/RRH Project. (Required for Rural Set Aside) Special NOFO Section VII.B.4.b.

Please see the Healthcare Leveraging Commitment uploaded to the Attachments screen.

P-3. Current Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness. Special NOFO Section VII.B.4.c.

P-3.a Current Street Outreach Strategy. (Required for Rural Set Aside) Special NOFO Sections VII.B.4.c.(1)

1. Ensure that outreach teams are coordinated: The SEO CoC covers 21 counties in southeastern Oklahoma and is divided into sub-regional areas. Outreach to and engagement of individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness differs in scale and scope across the sub-regional areas. In many areas, there is generally only one entity conducting outreach. They coordinate with local agencies, law enforcement, and volunteers to identify known and/or new locations, areas of concern, or other pertinent information. SSVF provides services in all 21 counties in the CoC and also coordinates with other outreach staff, local agencies and law enforcement when conducting outreach.

2. Ensure that outreach is frequent: In Muskogee, Green Country Behavioral Health conducts outreach twice per week. In Ada, outreach is done bi-monthly and "as-needed" when new locations are identified. In Ardmore, The Grace Center has a volunteer that visits encampments 3-4 times per month. In other rural areas, outreach is done as needed when a need is identified by the agency, partner, or law enforcement. Prior to the pandemic, SSVF conducted outreach to veterans weekly. Currently, they still conduct outreach but it is on more of an as needed basis. They expect to resume weekly outreach in 2023. The Projects for Assistance in Transition from

Homelessness (PATH) Program covers five counties and conducts street outreach three times per week.

3. Help people exit homelessness and unsheltered homelessness: Outreach staff work with people experiencing homelessness to build relationships and develop trust. Outreach staff ensures all people they encounter are aware of emergency shelter and potential housing options. When persons are amenable, outreach staff will complete the Coordinated Entry Assessment with the household to determine their initial needs. Outreach staff will work with the household to make contact with appropriate agencies to begin addressing their identified needs. Outreach staff will do a “warm handoff” to the appropriate agency.

4. Engage people experiencing homelessness with the highest vulnerabilities: Outreach staff engages people experiencing homelessness where they are living or frequenting, such as feeding locations, food pantries, the public library, or free clinics. This increases the likelihood of encountering those with the highest vulnerabilities. The Coordinated Entry System (CES) Assessment will be used to help identify these persons. Outreach staff also confers with staff at the frequented locations to identify and locate those with the highest vulnerabilities.

5. Use the outreach teams to connect people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing:

Agencies conducting outreach are access points for the CES. They use the CES Assessment to determine initial needs and appropriate referrals for permanent housing.

KI BOIS Community Action has applied for a Homeless Set Aside project through the Supplemental NOFO. For their project, all referrals in Muskogee will come through the Green Country Behavioral Health (GCBH) Street Outreach Team.

6. Hire people with lived expertise to conduct street outreach: The CoC’s does not have a written policy regarding hiring people with lived expertise (PwLE) to conduct outreach. The CoC encourages all programs to hire PwLE in their programs for any available positions. The CoC believes PwLE have intimate knowledge that can only be acquired through experience which makes them uniquely qualified to engage others experiencing homelessness. All ESG sub-grantees have hired PwLE. Some are still on staff, some are not. One current ESG Program Director is a person with lived expertise. One DV shelter that is an ESG sub-grantee has a person on staff with lived expertise. The Grace Center currently has a staff person with lived experience and will be specifically hiring PwLE to work in their new low barrier shelter when it opens. The SSVF Program has hired persons with lived expertise as case managers in the past. They do not have anyone on staff at this time. The Gospel Rescue Mission in Muskogee has PwLE on staff. One of their PwLE staff serves on the CoC Executive Committee. GCBH has four PwLE on staff. They work on the Street Outreach Team and in other program areas to provide services to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Lived Experience Work Group Feedback: People on the street need food. They need some form of identification. Perhaps their picture could be put on their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. More street outreach teams are needed. Street outreach teams need to educate people about services. Staff with lived experience need to accompany people to service provider agencies. There needs to be more services available for people who are having a mental health crisis. Job descriptions and applications should be written so they do not screen out people with lived expertise.

P-3.b. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness. Special NOFO Sections VII.B.4.c.(2)

1. Describe your CoC's current strategy:

It is, of course, the goal of the SEO CoC to provide immediate access to low-barrier shelter for all persons experiencing homelessness. However, the CoC does not have a formalized CoC-wide strategy. Strategies vary based on area: urban vs. rural vs very rural. Only four of 21 CoC counties have mainstream shelters. All mainstream shelters are faith-based and have some type of requirement for entry. As part of the CoC's strategy, in areas where available, mainstream shelter will continue to be offered when appropriate. During the past 2 ½ years, ESG-CV funds have allowed agencies to provide immediate low-barrier access to shelter in 15 of the 21 counties through the use of motel vouchers. Community Action Agencies used Community Services Block Grant-COVID (CSBG-CV) funds to provide access in all 21 counties through the use of motel vouchers. For the most part, these funds have been expended. ESG agencies now have around the equivalent of 10-15% of their ESG-CV funds to provide case management, outreach, motel vouchers, and prevention and rapid-rehousing financial support. The SEO CoC contracted with Collaborative Solutions to provide training on winding down COVID programs and moving forward serving communities with minimal funds. This training was held on 09/13/22. In addition, the CoC has been holding input sessions and strategizing how to move forward with minimal funds and greater need. Strategies include building new and reaffirming existing partnerships, revising the Coordinated Entry (CE) Assessment Tool to further ensure it identifies and prioritizes those with the most severe service needs and vulnerabilities, formalizing outreach referral partnerships, and replicating best practices from one sub-regional area to others in the CoC. The CoC will continue to work with the existing shelters to reduce barriers to entry. The CoC is currently working with and is supportive of The Grace Center, who has submitted a Supportive Services Only – Coordinated Entry (SSO-CE) application through the Supplemental NOFO which will be paired with a building they have purchased to provide low-barrier non-congregate shelter.

2. Describe how well your CoC's current strategy performs: The voucher system works very well in all counties to provide low barrier, non-congregate, and culturally appropriate accommodations. This allows access to immediate shelter in areas that would otherwise require transportation at least one hour or more to a mainstream shelter if the household was eligible.

3. Identify any new practices your CoC implemented and the lessons learned: The wide-scale use of motel vouchers was new for the SEO CoC as the amount of COVID funding was unprecedented. The SEO CoC has only had minimal funds for voucher use previously. Lessons learned included access to food is not always readily available at all motel locations. Even if a household has a food voucher or funds to purchase food, they must have access to transportation to purchase food.

Lived Experience Work Group Feedback: We need more low barrier shelters. What about the people who choose to be homeless. What services are available for them?

P-3.c Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low Barrier Permanent Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness. (Required for Rural Set Aside). Special NOFO Sections VII.B.4.c.(3)

1. Describe your CoC's current strategy, which must include:

a. How your CoC utilizes a Housing First Approach in implementing its current strategy:

The CoC strategy requires all CoC funded projects and ESG programs to utilize a Housing First approach when connecting persons who are unsheltered with permanent housing. SSVF also utilizes a Housing First approach when connecting Veterans to permanent housing. This has been very difficult over the last two years and continues to be extremely difficult now. Rural areas already suffered from insufficient and dilapidated housing stock. Now, that same housing stock is significantly over-priced and scarce. The more urban areas are also suffering from an over-priced rental market. In cases where there is no immediate housing available and the situation warrants, temporary shelter may be offered and is intended to be as brief as possible and culturally appropriate.

As part of the CoC's strategy to provide immediate access, programs have engaged in landlord education and incentives. Landlords are educated on the benefits of having a case manager as a partner to them and the tenant. In some cases, landlord incentives have been provided when funding is available and the incentive will ensure immediate access.

Moving forward, the CoC will work with CoC/ESG funded agencies to complete the HUD Housing First Assessment to identify areas of concern, opportunities for improvement, and share Housing First resources to support quality program design. The CoC has yet to determine how often the Assessment will be completed or policies addressing use of the results.

b. How the strategy is connected to the permanent housing resources identified in the CoCs response to "Leveraging Housing Resources" portion of the CoC Plan for Serving Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Severe Service Needs (Special NOFO Section VII.B.4.a):

The strategy to provide immediate access is directly tied to landlord engagement and education. Some landlords are skeptical of the Housing First model and philosophy. Education and partnership building are essential to sell landlords on the philosophy and leverage their units. Addressing landlord concerns regarding tenant readiness is also a critical strategy the CoC plans to address through its Tenant Readiness curriculum.

Negotiating agreements with landlords for "right of first refusal" on units that become available is a significant step toward providing immediate access to low barrier permanent housing for households with severe service needs and vulnerabilities.

2. Demonstrate how the CoCs current strategy performs at providing low-barrier and culturally appropriate access to permanent housing to individuals and families who have histories of unsheltered homelessness:

The current strategy has performed well over the last two years as there have been funds available to serve an increased number of households, hire additional staff, and provide landlord incentives. The CoC used Rapid Re-housing (RRH) funds to house 342 households (604 people) during the 12 month period from 07/01/2021 to 06/30/2022.

Moving forward, the CoC and its agencies will have reduced funding and staff. They will need to rely even more on partnerships formed over the last two years, especially with landlords, to provide low-barrier and culturally appropriate access to permanent housing for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

3. Provide the evidence that supports the use of the CoCs current strategy:

The effects of landlord incentives and increased engagement are evident when reviewing the following RRH HMIS data.

07/01/2020 to 06/30/2021 254 households (464 people) were rapidly housed using RRH funds.

07/01/2021 to 06/30/2022 342 households (604 people) were rapidly housed using RRH funds.

An additional 88 households were housed with the full implementation of incentives and increased engagement.

4. Identify new practices the CoC has implemented across its geographic area in the past three years and the lessons learned from implementing those practices:

New practices include landlord incentives implemented to recruit new landlords. The incentives successfully helped agencies obtain housing for households with high barriers. Lessons learned from using incentives are that landlords are more interested in protecting their investment/asset by renting to respectful tenants that understand the responsibilities that come with occupying someone else's property.

The CoC has recently obtained several written commitments from area property managers agreeing to give program participants "right of first refusal" when units become available. This is a new strategy for the CoC and is just now being implemented therefore, there are no lessons learned at this time.

Lived Experience Work Group Feedback: There are too many income barriers to accessing housing. Landlords are requiring the equivalent of 2 to 3 months' worth of rent in the potential tenant's bank account to be eligible to rent a unit. HUD properties need supportive services on-site. Examples include no cost washers and dryers, tenant/landlord education, medical and mental health services, wellness checks, transportation to resources, a food pantry, and have the Mobile Smiles dental van on-site a couple times per year.

P-4. Updating the CoC's Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance. Special NOFO Sections VII.B.4.d.

1. For street outreach:

a. How data, performance, and best practices will be utilized to improve the performance of and expand street outreach within the CoC:

The CoC, in partnership with agencies conducting street outreach, will regularly analyze data collected from multiple sources, including feedback from PwLE, to identify over and under-represented populations and potential disparities within street outreach. This analysis will provide a template for improving and expanding outreach strategies.

b. Street outreach activities are connected to coordinated entry or HMIS:

The CoC will be actively exploring strategies to improve the connection between street outreach and the CE System. The Lead Agency has met with Unite Us staff to determine if this is a possible mechanism to improve the connection.

c. How your CoC will incorporate new partners (e.g., business owners, law enforcement, healthcare providers) into its street outreach strategies:

The CoC and its agencies have specifically targeted Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) as partners to assist with outreach. FQHCs have care coordinators that work with patients who need additional supports, such as housing. The strategy is to educate care coordinators and have them work in partnership with the local agencies to provide needed supports. Ideally, they would become CE access points.

2. For low-barrier shelter and temporary accommodations:

a. How data, performance, and best practices will be used to improve access to low-barrier shelter and temporary accommodations:

The CoC will use data from the PiT, HIC, HMIS, and other data sources to evaluate access to low-barrier shelter and identify existing best practices. The CoC is acutely aware its mainstream shelters are not low-barrier. The CoC will continue to educate and partner with these shelters while continually pushing for lower barriers to entry. The CoC will also continue to encourage shelters to use HMIS or a comparable database to improve its ability to analyze data and use the outcomes to improve performance and recognize best practices.

b. How data, performance, and best practices will be used to expand, as necessary, low-barrier shelter and temporary accommodations:

Through annual analysis of the Housing Inventory Count/Chart and feedback from providers, the CoC is overtly aware of the need for low-barrier shelters and temporary accommodations. The CoC has been fervent in its support of the application submitted through the Special NOFO by The Grace Center. Their SSO-CE application will allow them to go full scale with their outreach connected to CE and their non-congregate shelter.

c. Any new practices and activities that will be funded through an award under this competition:

Through the Supplemental NOFO, The Grace Center will be renovating a building to be used to provide supportive services in conjunction with street outreach, Coordinated Entry, and non-congregate shelter to successfully move people from the streets or encampments to low-barrier shelter. Their focus will also be on expanding Coordinated Entry partnerships to provide access to a wide array of services and case management that will provide low-barrier options in rural areas.

3. For permanent housing:

a. How data, performance, and best practices will be utilized to improve the CoCs ability to rapidly house, in permanent housing, individuals and families with histories of unsheltered homelessness:

The CoC will analyze specific data from CE, HMIS, and Annual Progress Reports (APRs) to determine if permanent housing outcomes are being achieved. These include length of time to move-in, destinations, and returns to homelessness. The CoC will use information derived through regular analysis, to update and improve their strategies to rapidly house individuals and families with histories of unsheltered homelessness. Best practices will be identified through analysis and in the newly created peer group then, shared with other agencies.

b. How data, performance, and best practices will be utilized to expand the CoCs ability to rapidly house, in permanent housing, individuals and families with histories of unsheltered homelessness

Through analysis of funding availability, paired with the near exhaustion of COVID, the CoC acknowledged it was going to face a crisis in trying to serve people experiencing homelessness as need continues to increase. The Executive Committee was convened to review the Supplemental NOFO, how the funding could support rural efforts and view the roll out webinars. Afterward, the Executive Committee made an informed decision to submit a Consolidated Application in order to give agencies an opportunity to access new funds that were targeted to rural areas and expand their ability to rapidly house persons with histories of unsheltered homelessness.

P-5. Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness. (Required for Rural Set Aside). Special NOFO Sections VII.B.4.e.

1. Your CoC's strategy for ensuring that resources provided under this Special NOFO will reduce unsheltered homelessness:

The CoC's strategy starts with creating a peer group made up of agencies receiving awards through the Supplemental NOFO. This group will participate in quarterly meetings and trainings to ensure policies are understood and being followed, CE is being used appropriately, brainstorm solutions for barriers or issues, and identify best practices. The CoC will analyze specific data points from CE, HMIS, and Annual Progress Reports (APRs). These include length of time to move-in, destinations, and returns to homelessness.

2. How your CoC will adopt:

a. Program eligibility processes that reduce unsheltered homelessness:

The CoC has prioritized serving people experiencing unsheltered homelessness through the Supplemental NOFO. As all projects must employ a Housing First model, eligibility processes will be simplified and tailored to meet the needs of persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness. As an example, this may include strategies such as not requiring specific ID's or paperwork for program eligibility or enrollment.

b. Coordinated entry processes that reduce unsheltered homelessness:

The CE System policies and procedures will be updated to reflect new prioritization strategies that place greater emphasis on unsheltered homelessness, vulnerabilities, and severe service needs. The CoC will be revising the CE Assessment Tool to further ensure it identifies and prioritizes those who are unsheltered with the most severe service needs and vulnerabilities.

3. How your CoC will use street outreach to connect those living in unsheltered situations with housing resources:

The CoC, in partnership with street outreach agencies, agencies providing housing, and PwLE, will develop policies and procedures to provide clear strategies for using street outreach as a conduit to housing resources. Partnerships between outreach staff and housing staff will be key to ensuring the connection is made.

KI BOIS Community Action has applied for a Homeless Set Aside project through the Supplemental NOFO. For their project, all referrals in Muskogee will come through the Green Country Behavioral Health (GCBH) Street Outreach Team.

4. Additional steps your CoC is taking to ensure that people who are unsheltered or have histories of unsheltered homelessness can access housing and other resources in the community, including steps to:

a. Increase access to identification:

The CoC will work to expand CE access in all areas, but with a focus on rural and very rural areas, by recruiting non-traditional partners to be access points. These may include food pantries, churches, other faith-based entities, libraries, and FQHCs. The CoC has already targeted FQHCs and their care coordinators to assist in identification.

b. Provide housing navigation services:

The CoC will provide training on housing navigation for agencies who do not have a dedicated housing navigator and develop housing strategy sheets to guide navigation efforts. The Grace Center has a housing navigator on staff. SSVF has allocated 50% of one full time employee to serve as a housing specialist (navigator) to work with people who are unsheltered or have histories of unsheltered homelessness to secure housing placement.

c. Provide access to health care and other supportive services:

CoC agencies are developing partnerships or already have partnerships with FQHCs to provide health care services for persons who are unsheltered. The CoC is working to develop care meetings between FQHC care coordinators and case managers. These meetings will provide opportunities for resource sharing and the development of case conferencing protocols. The CoC will be recruiting FQHC staff to participate in CoC meetings.

Multiple agencies have established relationships with the free clinics in their communities. Agencies also have established relationships with their local county Health Department and work with their community health workers to provide care for persons who are unsheltered.

The CoC and its agencies have also partnered with local mental health providers to facilitate services. Many of the mental health providers participate in case conferencing.

P-6. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making– Meaningful Outreach. (Required for Rural Set Aside). Special NOFO Sections VII.B.4.f.

1. The meaningful outreach efforts (e.g., street outreach, social media announcements) to engage those with lived homelessness experience to develop a working group:

This summer, the CoC partnered with the University of Oklahoma School of Social Work (OU-SoW) and the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) to collect feedback on the homeless services system, its gaps, and barriers. Social work students met with and assisted PwLE complete a survey regarding their situation and experiences. A work group of PwLE was recruited and convened. The work group coordinator is a person with lived expertise and was able to recruit a diverse group of participants. The work group provided feedback and experiential information OU-SoW. This information will help inform the OHFA plan to spend their ARPA HOME funds. The work group also gave input into this plan. The CoC has asked the members of the work group to continue in this capacity to provide meaningful input into the CoC processes.

2. How individuals and families experiencing homelessness, particularly those who have experienced unsheltered homelessness, are meaningfully and intentionally integrated into the CoC decision making structure:

The CoC currently has a PwLE serving on its Executive Committee. This person participates in all activities including approval of scoring tools and other documents, scoring of applications, and approval of applications.

The CoC plans to develop work groups to two other areas in the CoC to allow for more diverse input into the CoC decision making structure.

3. How your CoC encourages projects to involve individuals and families with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness in the delivery of services (e.g., by hiring people with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness).

The CoC encourages all programs to hire PwLE in their programs for any available positions. The CoC believes PwLE have intimate knowledge that can only be acquired through experience which makes them uniquely qualified to engage others experiencing homelessness. The CoC is considering incentivizing the hiring of PwLE by awarding bonus points to applications in future CoC and ESG funding opportunities.

Lived Experience Work Group Feedback: Job descriptions and applications should be written so they do not screen out people with lived expertise.

P-6a. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making– Letter of Support from Working Group Comprised of Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness. (Required for Rural Set Aside) Special NOFO Sections VI.F.1.g and VII.B.4.f.

Please see Lived Experience Work Group support letter uploaded to the Attachments screen.

P-7. Supporting Underserved Communities and Supporting Equitable Community Development. (Required for Rural Set Aside) Special NOFO Sections VII.B.4.g.

1. Your CoC’s current strategy to identify populations in your CoC’s geography that have not been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness:

The CoC’s strategy starts with data analysis. The CoC utilizes Stella P data, HMIS data, PiT data, and comparable database data in comparison to each other and general population data retrieved from the Community Action Assessment Tool to analyze services by project type and by all project types together. Analyzing by project type reveals who and which household type is using specific services at a higher rate than the average across all project types, who has higher rates of return, who is not accessing services, etc... The CoC will be conducting an equity analysis in the coming year. This will include analyzing disparities in race, gender, disability, LGBTQIA+, age, and any others identified during the assessment. Once the analysis is complete, strategies will be developed for targeted engagement of populations not accessing services.

2. How underserved communities in your CoC’s geographic area interact with the homeless system, including a description of those populations:

Interaction with the homeless service system varies across the CoC and differs in more urban vs rural areas. In more urban areas, underserved communities interact with street outreach and law enforcement on a more regular basis. These underserved communities include higher percentages of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), people who identify as LGBTQIA+, people with a mental health diagnosis, and people with a felony record. In rural areas, underserved communities interact with churches, community partners including health care, and law enforcement. These underserved communities include higher percentages of Native Americans, people with substance abuse issues, and victims of domestic violence and their children.

3. Your CoC’s current strategy to provide outreach, engagement, and housing interventions to serve populations experiencing homelessness that have not previously been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness:

The CoC strategies to serve populations experiencing homelessness that have not previously been served at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness are currently under development. Strategies will differ across the sub-regional areas based on the populations identified as not receiving services by the homeless service system at the same rate. The CoC uses data analysis as described previously in the plan to assist in identifying these populations.

The CoC is keenly aware the LGBTQIA+ community is under-represented. A member of the CoC Executive Committee has reached out to an active college Pride group to initiate conversations on why they may not seek services and what changes they would suggest to improve willingness to access services.

The CoC will be forming an Advancing Equity Committee to conduct an equity analysis of access to services and service provision. The equity analysis will be the launching point for revising policies, procedures, strategies, and tools to improve services to those who are over-represented in the homeless population but under-represented in services.