Questions

One requirement for the CoC Board is to have a seat for at least one person with lived expertise (currently or formerly homeless) on the Board. Do you have recommendation as to how the person or people for this seat(s) on the Board are selected?

- Consider things like how long they have been homeless and how they are trying to better themselves; want someone who will have everyone’s best interests at heart.
- Selection process for this person(s) should be an anonymous vote; people can apply for a position and share what their perspective is in this work
- Share information at programs (flyers), through social media; be sure to have lots of ways to get the information out and spread the word
- Involvement in committees that help identify gaps in the system, or committees responsible for reviewing applications for CoC Program funding
- Encourage that all committees all have a seat reserved for someone who is either homeless or formerly homeless
- Participants shared that they have diverse backgrounds and experiences that they could bring to the table (background in business management, IT, government work, etc.)
- Support for having someone with lived expertise on the Board
- Nominations and voting process

What do you think of reserving a spot on every committee for someone who has lived expertise?

- Yes, having people with lived expertise on a committee is something that interests them

What do you think of having a committee or group JUST for people with lived expertise?

- Community is already considering having a Youth Action Board (YAB)
- Diversity is needed for this type of decision making work; need to have all perspectives represented
- With youth engagement, encourage that there be someone to help mediate/support them in this work
- To get people engaged, go do outreach in the community to find people that will tell you more about what their needs are
- Very supportive of this suggestion; the most helpful/useful ideas will come from people that have been homeless; reality versus what funders/advocates/policymakers think the experience of being homeless is like
- Serve on a committee to discuss policies, prioritization work
- Listening Sessions like today
- Share the stories of people who are homeless/don’t generalize why people are homeless
- Forum for grievances (now just a form)
- Have connections with people in power that help them understand the experience of being homeless
- So many different stories, perspectives and backgrounds among people who are experiencing homelessness—anyone can lose their home, and people need to understand that there are a variety of experiences reflected among people who are homeless
• Would like an opportunity for people who were previously homeless to give back to those who are currently homeless; would like for this to be coordinated through outreach to help people navigate services by putting together and distributing a guide.

What support would you need in order to attend Board and/or committee meetings?

• Funding for people attending meetings; stipends
  — Preference for cash versus gift cards
• SSI/SSDI limitations with inability to work or earn above a minimal amount
• Compensation for time spent on Board and committees
• Bus passes, transportation assistance, uber card; shuttles
• Food
• Central location is necessary too; have a meeting on a bus line
• Staff support/mediation for meetings to help facilitate and keep meetings focused
  — Have a staff person available to meet with people in advance of a meeting so that they feel prepared and up to speed BEFORE the meeting
    ▪ Will help things feel more welcoming
• Make people feel welcomed at meetings; don’t use too much jargon, meet people at the door, and be responsive to the person’s needs (introverted, extroverted, etc.)
• Website or email address to interact in between meetings
• Childcare is also a consideration
  — Don’t want to just leave kids with volunteers, make it possible for people to bring kids to meetings
• Timing of meetings—offer meetings at varied times to encourage more participation (morning, afternoon, evening)
• Offer multiple meeting times
• Encourage team building, something to help get everyone involved (mindfulness, commitment to why we’re there); make sure that things don’t always feel so business-y (that’ll help people feel engaged)
• Best forms of social media—Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Text Blast might also be a resource to help with this type of communication
• Reminders for meeting; emails, local paper (the blast), TV at shelter, flyers, notices on the loud speakers at the shelters, social media, hotline (press 1 if you can attend, press 2 if you can’t, complete a survey to give feedback), texting us
• Advanced notice is key to schedule/plan around it so that people can attend
• Need to be flexible to people’s needs/schedules/situations
• Anyone who has a history of drug or substance abuse should be asked to do a drug test before they are put in housing or before they are put on the Board
  — Once you have completed recovery, that should stay in your past and should not be held against you or something that people can’t use against them
  — Don’t penalize/hold things against people who are experiencing homelessness; no one is asking service providers or other Board members to do that sort of drug testing
• Encourage the election of someone to the Board; have a town hall meeting to get feedback, share stories (do so via phone, have multiple ways of voting)
MISC:

- Participant question: are there any government agencies from the judicial system involved in the CoC?
  - Suggest collaborating with both NC and SC judicial systems to address/help with a variety of legal issues (i.e. conservatorship); also related to disability/advocacy issue. Also, something to ensure that case managers in the CoC are well versed to ensure that these types of issues are identified and addressed.
  - Another issue identified is a lack of legal resources to deal with law issues on a federal and international basis (people moving to NC from other states or countries, and only have access to lawyers that can practice in NC or SC)
- Want advocacy
- Systemic issues that are not being addressed re: poverty
- It’s a great thing that Mecklenburg County has access to this funding, but it needs to be managed/advised by people that have experienced homelessness.
- Encourage having a focus on youth as well, and ensure engagement with them to encourage them to make different life choices to help avoid long term homelessness
- Suggested having more case management to help navigate and get out of the system (e.g. 4 case managers for about 400 people at the Men’s Shelter; one person shared that they have been here for several months and still has not been assigned a case manager); can’t fault the case managers, the need is far greater than the resources available to support this
- Need a service guide/directory to help navigate the system; as well as who are the right people to get connected to for help
- How do you want to be involved in the CoC?
  - Ok with listening sessions so long as we can demonstrate back to participants that the information/opinions from the sessions are being used/put to work.
  - Encourage that the sessions happen where people are (location)
  - Identify that not everyone is comfortable sharing things verbally
  - Want to do more of these to get people who are in crisis connected to people who can make a difference in their situation
- More information out/sharing; public website
- Ensure realtors, developers are engaged in the CoC Board work
- Reps from and more funding for MH services
- Development of high cost housing in poor neighborhoods; gentrification
- More staff training
- Prioritization for elderly
- Dallas, TX The Bridge 24/7
- Shelter rules/policies (can’t bring son to men’s shelter)