Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC Listening Session and Survey Feedback on Governance (10/2/2019)

Membership, Meetings and Decision-Making:

- Clarify difference between Homeless Services Network and CoC. People are confused. How should the two relate?
- CoC voting membership should reflect the agencies that do the lion’s share of work to reduce homelessness in the community.
- CoC membership should be broader than just the agencies receiving HUD funding. Other key agencies should be recruited because they play a role in ending homelessness and because the funding application calls for addressing issues, such as income and employment, that cannot be solved only by the agencies receiving HUD funds.
- All members of the CoC should be able to give input. When it comes to voting, there should be designated agencies, each with one vote, regardless of how many from that agency attend.
- There should be a process for becoming a member, whether for agency or individual membership. There should be criteria for voting, such as being the designated voter for an agency that is an active member.
- Responsibilities of membership should include: keeping the “systems” perspective and mission to reduce homelessness in the forefront, defining the process for ranking projects in the funding application, guiding collaborative efforts to maximize resources, selecting a governing board, monitoring progress toward goals, actively participating in the meetings, becoming and remaining informed, keeping the discussions in the room—not in the parking lot.
- To encourage broader participation and to build trust, all CoC processes should be as transparent and straight-forward as possible.
- Technical assistance should be made available to agencies that request help to complete e-snaps applications.
- It has been unclear which decisions the CoC membership has taken in the past, versus the CoC Board.
- Decide what full membership should vote on versus committees versus Board.
- Voting members of the CoC should include: provider agencies that serve the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, the CoC Governing Board, HSN leadership, people with lived experience.
- To effectively engage people with lived experience, they should be compensated (perhaps with a stipend). Child care issues should be addressed.
- There should be remote access for CoC meetings.
- CoC meetings should have deliberate purpose. Reasons for the full CoC membership to meet could include: providing input for decisions, voting on the Governing Board, voting on funding priorities, approving the funding application, voting on the ranking tool for the funding application.
- Structure committees around regular happenings, e.g. NOFA, Board selection. Do the main work of the CoC in committees, recommend up to the Board. Have Board members each serve on committees.
- Potential committees include: Family, Chronic Homelessness, Coordinated Entry, Veterans, Youth, HMIS, Nominating, Evaluation (of Board), Mainstream Connections.
• CoC meeting agendas should be posted at least five days in advance, along with back-up materials, and sent to membership via email.
• Indicate within all agendas which items will be voted on.
• CoC minutes should be posted and sent to membership via email.

CoC Governing Board:

• The Governing Board should have representation from: a variety of people with lived experience of homelessness, agencies that serve homeless youth, families, veterans and the chronically homeless, corporate business, service providers (Permanent Supportive Housing, Shelters, Transitional Housing, Prevention, Rapid Re-housing, Coordinated Entry, funders, the criminal justice system, mental health/physical health, substance use providers, attorneys (such as Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy), veterans groups, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, each of the North Mecklenburg Towns, front line staff, the faith community, the Fire Department, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, affordable housing developers, Foundation for the Carolinas, Medic, Domestic Violence service providers, hospitals, groups working on economic mobility, City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Housing Authority.
• Board members should include agencies that receive CoC funds.
• Stakeholders should include frontline staff; consider category slots versus agency slots (such as healthcare, education, etc.)
• The Board should have an odd number of members, perhaps 17 – 21.
• Consider how large the Board should be in order to function well; who is a candidate and able to commit the time and effort and serve as an active member.
• Board could be tiered to blend different levels of participation; create working core.
• The function of the Board is to make strategic and financial decisions on behalf of the membership, with input from CoC membership and committees. Specific Board functions include: setting direction, providing leadership, developing strategies, aligning and coordinating homeless resources with mainstream resources, recruiting new member agencies to the CoC, advocating for resources, promoting inclusion and diversity on the Board and in the membership, keeping people engaged, approving contracts and memoranda of understanding, approving System Performance Measures upon submission and monitoring community progress against those measures, attending CoC membership meetings, creating workgroups (as needed) and giving guidance to the workgroups, selecting the Collaborative Applicant and the HMIS Lead.
• The Board should have by-laws that address voting, selection of officers, terms of office, parliamentary procedure, etc.
• Hold Board accountable to what it is supposed to do; measure what it is doing.
• Consider rotations within agency if board member cannot attend meeting; set term limits, have staggered terms, create policy for recusal.
• Create nominating committee to select board members for approval / vote.
• Put parameters in place to manage CoC actions that can be done without requiring a vote.
CoC Committees:

- Determine which committees are needed, and why. Suggestions include: Coordinated Entry Oversight, Nominating Committee (to recruit and propose a slate of officers), Data Quality and Research, Oversight Committee, Membership Committee, Point in Time/Housing Inventory Chart Committee, demographic group committees (focused on youth, family, veterans, chronically homeless, etc.), Funding Application Task Group, Equity, and a Consumer Advisory Council.
- An Equity Committee would focus on policies and impacts to determine whether homelessness is addressed in an equitable and inclusive manner, given that African Americans are significantly over-represented in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg homeless population.
- A Consumer Advisory Council would consist of people with lived homelessness experience who could provide input on proposed priorities, policies and procedures. Compensation, in some form, would be offered to members of the Council.
- The HUD CoC Notice of Funding Availability should guide creation of committees. For example, if information is sought by HUD on community efforts to increase employment and income, then there should be a committee that takes on that role.
- Every committee would have one or more goals and assignments, jointly determined with the Board, and would report back to the Governing Board and membership at set intervals.
- Committees will be composed of members of the CoC and others, when their expertise is required.
- The Board should determine which decisions require committee study and recommendations prior to approval.
- Decisions should be made about whether the various committees will be staffed, and by whom.
- Integrate lived experience perspectives throughout; consider payment for participation.
- Add Nominating and Evaluation Committees.
- Additional charges for committees and/or Board include: advocacy, funding and system change.
- Structure committees around regular happenings, e.g. NOFA, Board selection. Do the main work of the CoC in committees, recommend up to the Board. Have Board members each serve on committees.
- Potential committees include: Family, Chronic Homelessness, Coordinated Entry, Veterans, Youth, HMIS, Nominating, Evaluation (of Board), Mainstream Connections.

Selection of Collaborative Applicant (CA) and HMIS Lead:

- There should be a letter of interest process, criteria for selection, and a recommendation by a committee whose members have no conflict of interest.
- The selected CA should: designate full-time staff with leadership and writing skills, have experience working with homeless populations, and experience complying with federal rules and regulations.
- Key CA responsibilities include: staffing the full CoC and the Board and coordinating the strongest possible local application for funding.
• The CA should be retained based on performance each year. There should be a selection process every 3-5 years.
• Review/re-selection of CA should happen at minimum every 5 years to allow for continuity and hiring of staff. Exceptions would be if the CA has failed to deliver on established plan, etc.
• There should be MOUs between the CoC Board and CA, HMIS Lead, and any other relevant entity.
• The CA is a facilitator of an engagement process and application completer.
• When selecting CA, criteria should be set, and relevant resources required defined. It is a question of who has the resources to meet the criteria; if an entity does not have the resources, it is not qualified to apply or be selected.
• Selection of an HMIS Lead should be impartial. It should reflect CoC needs and the number of staff needed to do the work.

Oversight and Conflicts of Interest:

Oversight is needed in these areas:

✓ Do System Performance Measures show progress?
✓ Is HMIS operating as it should?
✓ Is the CA performing as it should?
✓ Is the Board performing its functions? Are the committees performing?
✓ Is the CoC operating inclusively and equitably? Or narrowly?
✓ Does the collaborative application reflect priorities? Is it strong?
✓ How well is the Board communicating with the committees and membership?

Ways to ensure accountability include:

✓ Recording attendance at meetings
✓ Developing a written work plan and reporting progress against the plan
✓ Ensuring the community's priorities are clear, the ranking process for the funding application is transparent, the ranking criteria are clear up front, and no one with a conflict of interest votes
✓ Providing technical assistance for “dumb questions” related to the application process
✓ Implementing an accessible grievance process
✓ Create an Evaluation Committee that can review annual workplan of Board, Collaborative Applicant and HMIS Lead, as part of an annual process.