

BENTON COUNTY

COORDINATED HOMELESS RESPONSE OFFICE (CHRO)

HB 4123 COORDINATED HOMELESS RESPONSE PILOTS – NOVEMBER 2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The [Benton County Coordinated Homeless Response Office \(CHRO\)](#) consists of two dedicated full-time county staff members within the county Health Department that comprise a program coordinator and project manager along with one part-time contracted grant writer and researcher. These positions support internal and external homeless response efforts through comprehensive coordination, facilitation, project management, capacity building, and community engagement. These positions were established prior to Benton County becoming an HB 4123 community and have been overseeing the County's implementation of HB 4123 requirements.

The Coordinated Homeless Response Office works closely with the City of Corvallis Community Development Department staff and Community Services Consortium leadership to coordinate efforts to implement HB 4123.

Prior to becoming a HB 4123 Pilot community, Benton County had a well-established Advisory Board: The Home, Opportunity, Planning, and Equity (HOPE) Advisory Board. At the time of this report the HOPE Advisory Board had the following structure:

- Chartering Jurisdictions – Benton County and the City of Corvallis are the initial Chartering Jurisdictions. The Chartering Jurisdictions establish the bylaws, establish governance structure, have direct policy and funding authority, define scope of the Advisory Board and Executive Committee, provide staff support to the Advisory Board, and establish lead agency roles.
- Advisory Board – The Advisory Board provides a wide array of community expertise and representation of groups working on homelessness, housing, and social determinants of health.
- Executive Committee – The Executive Committee is a subset of the Advisory Board whose responsibilities include appointing Advisory Board members, adopting action plans presented to it by the Advisory Board, reviewing and

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assisting the Advisory Board to align its work with the bylaws, and presenting reports to Chartering Jurisdictions.

Amendments to the HOPE Advisory Board bylaws are needed to integrate the membership and functional requirements of the Advisory Board pursuant to HB 4123 (see Lessons Learned section below). At the time of preparing this report, the CHRO is engaging Benton County Board of Commissioners to seek direction on amending HOPE Advisory Board bylaws and the process for adopting the HB 4123 Coordinated Homeless Response System Strategic Plan.

Geographic coverage

Benton County's Coordinated Homeless Response System (System) covers the geographic boundaries of Benton County. This includes the Cities of Corvallis and Philomath, and all unincorporated communities within the county. The Cities of Adair Village and Monroe have been invited to formally partner with the System through formal membership via Benton County's Coordinated Homeless Response System Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In lieu of formal partnership, the CHRO prioritizes engaging and including the Cities of Adair Village and Monroe in updates regarding opportunities that support implementation of the Coordinated Homeless Response System 5-Year Strategic Plan (5-Year Plan).

Date of formal recognition/adoption of MOU or IGA recognizing the coordinated effort:

Benton County, the City of Corvallis, and Community Services Consortium entered into the MOU in September 2022. This agreement was later amended to include the City of Philomath in May 2023.

STRATEGIC PLAN

As described above, prior to becoming a HB 4123 pilot community, Benton County and the City of Corvallis formed the HOPE Board in 2019. The HOPE Board was

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created to support Benton County's response to homelessness with improved transparency and inclusion for all sectors of the community, especially people experiencing homelessness. The HOPE Board includes leaders from our Hispanic community, Black community, LGBTQI2S+ community, as well as representatives from rural communities, city council, county Board of Commissioners, police, fire department, social service providers (Samaritan LCSW, housing first, transitional housing, shelter), InterCommunity Health Network Coordinated Care Organization (IHN-CCO) CEO, school district McKinney Vento representative, OSU recent graduates, business community representative, and data experts.

In the summer of 2021, Benton County and the City of Corvallis accepted 12 policy recommendations developed by the HOPE Board. Building on Benton County's 10-Year Plan (10-Year Plan) and an update to the 10-Year Plan in 2017, the HOPE Board policy recommendations focus the community's response to homelessness by prioritizing vulnerable populations, racial and ethnic justice, and community safety for all. The HOPE Board policy recommendations and the Update to the 10-Year Plan serve as the foundation and outline for the (5-Year Plan).

Built from the basis of this extensive, collaborative foundation, the purpose of the Strategic Plan is to provide a community roadmap, guide work and resource prioritization, provide clear metrics to encourage accountability and thoughtful stewardship, and articulate strategic priorities. These strategic priority areas comprise:

- I. Community and Organizational Systems and Policy Change: To provide a home for everyone, we must increase coordination and collaboration of service providers and strengthen efficiencies in our current system and better align our resources. This includes coordination of services, increased cooperation and knowledge sharing, and strengthening cross-sector relationships.
- II. Comprehensive Care Coordination: Coordination of care helps us prioritize our highest need populations and better help people. Our community will

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need training, funding, and development of shared definitions to build our provider capacity to support this population.

- III. Prevention: Providing early intervention as well as improving systems and structures can address problems that contribute to homelessness and housing instability in both rural and urban areas of Benton County.
- IV. Street Outreach and Rapid Response: Implementing best practices – like harm reduction, low barrier approaches, and trauma-informed response – helps navigate people out of homelessness and improve outcomes.
- V. Housing: Expanding housing and sheltering options along the entire housing continuum ensures everyone in the community has a place to live. Leveraging and increasing resources will improve housing affordability and accessibility.
- VI. Community Engagement, Inclusion, and Neighborhood Belonging: Engaging our communities in both processes and solutions creates ownership of our progress. Our Coordinated Office strives to facilitate community education and dialogue about the causes and community impact of homelessness. We value local wisdom and lived experiences by elevating the voices of service providers and people who have experienced homelessness.

The Strategic Plan also outlines the values that guide our work, the data that informs our decisions, and the structure and resources that will sustain our efforts.

Background on the Development of HOPE policy recommendations:

In Summer 2020, the HOPE Board conducted a gap analysis of all available services in Benton County. The Board collected available data from homeless service and social service providers working to prevent homelessness to understand safety concerns, racial and ethnic inequalities, and vulnerable populations. Finally, the Board researched successful systems of housing and supportive services to transition people out of homelessness.

In Fall 2020, the Board prioritized four main topic areas based on this data-driven, systems-level approach with a focus on equity:

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1. Align and coordinate existing services with a focus on improving data collection and collaboration for individuals experiencing homelessness or in behavioral health crisis;
2. Establish a sheltering system for all populations that is accessible 24/7/365 days per year, as well as a Resource Center to support coordinated entry into publicly funded assistance programs;
3. Expand transitional options for housing with a focus on notice, communication, and engagement with neighborhoods and the larger community; and
4. Increase permanent supportive housing to provide stable housing for our chronically homeless community members.

Community Engagement prior to becoming a HB 4123 community:

In November and December 2020, the HOPE Board engaged the community throughout Benton County to receive feedback on the four priority topics (above). Public engagement included:

- Online surveys;
- Multiple virtual meetings soliciting community feedback;
- Board attendance at various community meetings including different sectors and perspectives; and
- In-person client surveying conducted by nine service providers in Benton County serving individuals in need or experiencing homelessness.

In April 2021, the Board received community feedback on the final draft of policy recommendations via a community survey and a virtual public forum. Homeless service providers at four different locations supported in-person focus groups with clients experiencing homelessness to provide their perspective on the draft recommendations.

In Summer 2021, the Benton County Board of Commissioners and the City of Corvallis City Council accepted the HOPE Policy Recommendations. Staff from Benton County and the City of Corvallis formed a workgroup consisting of County

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Health Department, City and County Community Development, and Community Services Consortium (CSC) staff to provide direction to their relative governing boards on prioritization on the implementation of the HOPE Policy Recommendations.

Community Engagement Upon Becoming a HB 4123 Community:

Staff from this original workgroup (described above) integrated HB 4123 planning and development into the HOPE Policy implementation work. Using the strategic priorities identified by the Update to the 10-Year Plan (2017) to organize the HOPE Policy Recommendations and requirements of HB 4123, staff developed an outline for Benton County's Coordinated Homeless Response System 5-Year Strategic Plan. Staff used this outline to conduct outreach to the governing bodies of the cities of Adair Village, Monroe, and Philomath to identify potential cross-jurisdictional alignment to inform the 5-Year Plan. Using this same strategy staff conducted outreach to regional and local stakeholders including, but not limited to:

- Affordable housing providers
- Behavioral health providers
- Educational agency liaisons for homeless children
- IHN-CCO
- Emergency shelter providers
- Homeless service providers
- OHCS
- Organizations serving and advocating for veterans
- Culturally responsive organizations

The HOPE Board serves as the main community engagement forum to provide feedback on the development of the 5-Year Plan. Coordinated Homeless Response Office staff will continue to leverage the HOPE Board's expertise and diverse

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experience to provide feedback for continuous improvement and implementation of the 5-Year Plan.

In addition to the extensive community engagement described above, multiple focus groups were hosted onsite at local providers, including:

- Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center,
- Corvallis Housing First,
- Community Outreach Inc. (COI), and
- SafeCamp

The focus groups discussed the draft HOPE policy recommendations and incorporated direct feedback from people currently experiencing homelessness or in transitional housing following homelessness. A one-page survey was also distributed by nine service provider organizations to collect approximately 240 responses from people accessing support in urban and rural locations in Benton County.

For ongoing representation of individuals with current and lived experience of homelessness, CSC provides stipends for HOPE Board members to increase engagement and support participation for communities of color, for people who have experienced homelessness, and for our LGBTQI2S+ community. These stipends have helped to support HOPE Board membership that includes five people with lived experience with homelessness, people from our Black and Hispanic communities, and multiple representatives from our LGBTQI2S+ community.

At the time this report was prepared, Benton County's Coordinated Homeless Response System 5-Year Plan has not been completed. Including the considerations in the Lessons Learned section below, Benton County's community work in response to House Bill 5019 impacted the anticipated time to complete and adopt the Strategic Plan. Benton County's HB 5019 community work has greatly informed the HB 4123 implementation, demonstrating an effective use of the structure provided by HB 4123 and identified opportunity to improve elements of the current draft Strategic Plan and governing documents (e.g., MOUs and IGAs). Furthermore, Benton County

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is committed to developing and implementing sustainable solutions to homelessness and such commitment requires prioritization of thoughtful processes and gaining community-wide understanding and buy-in on such solutions.

Lessons Learned

A large portion of the work to implement HB 4123 in Benton County has been the investigation of existing frameworks at the federal, state, and local level that influence and impact the local response to homelessness. This investigation is essential to prevent creation of redundant systems and the diversion of resources from existing successful programs.

In Benton County, the HB 4123 Coordinated Office is housed within county government. This structure is built on existing county investments for dedicated staffing to provide leadership and coordination in Benton County's response to homelessness. Understanding the appropriate role of county government in the local response to homelessness is essential in effectively deploying the resources of HB 4123. This understanding has been iterative as the Coordinated Office has worked collectively with the community to gain understanding of the complexity of the systems and structures that contribute to housing and homelessness solutions. For example, how does the work of the Coordinated Office participate with the Community Action Agency, Housing Authority, Coordinated Care Organization, Continuum of Care (CoC), City's affordable housing programs, and direct service providers to improve pathways for people at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness? Using Benton County's structure of HB 4123 for the planning and development of the HB 5019 Community Plan has provided insight on what this role is. Specifically, that this role must not only provide leadership and coordination of local services through policy development and community engagement, but it must also be equipped with funding resources to support the organizations and partners whose work is impacted by policies.

In addition, homelessness is not any one agency's sole responsibility. A Strategic Plan that can inform a community's local and regional work while aligning the multiple levels of resources and initiatives extends beyond the scope of county government

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influence and the work of the Coordinated Office. To capture the entire scope of work for an effective local Coordinated Homeless Response System, the work of multiple agencies must be included and aligned.

The purpose of Benton County's 5-Year Strategic Plan is to align the work of Benton County's Coordinated Office with the work of all other community partners in this sector. This alignment attempts to communicate the breadth of this topic, informing policy and investment decisions at multiple agency levels for collective impact.

Furthermore, because of the complexity of the systems and structures contributing to housing and homelessness solutions, it has been challenging to identify the roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Board as required by HB 4123. The formation of an advisory board that can effectively provide support to the Coordinated Office requires representation from the sectors that have authority over these systems and can make timely decisions to move the work of Coordinated Homeless Response System forward. Benton County is currently reevaluating the governance structure of the Coordinated Office as it supports the implementation of the 5-Year Strategic Plan. This has contributed to the delay of completing the Strategic Plan.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

As described above, a Strategic Plan that can guide work that has meaningful impact on Benton County's homelessness must acknowledge the multiple agencies that participate in housing and homelessness services and work to align efforts.

Benton County's Coordinated Office leveraged existing local and regional meetings and community engagement forums to build community awareness of HB 4123 and inform the development the 5-Year Plan. In these meetings, initiatives of local and regional agencies were documented to map out where there was potential for collective impact across Benton County's and partnering service areas. These meetings included:

- City council meetings with all Benton County Cities

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- Rural Continuum of Care (ROCC) meetings
- Tri-county coordination with regional partners:
 - IHN-CCO – coordination on supporting capacity building in social service community organizations, coordinating provider engagement and feedback for 1115 waiver rental assistance benefit through IHN's Coalition for Housing Equity.
 - Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG) – coordination on expanding OCWCOG capacity to engage in housing navigation and housing coordination with other community partners.
 - CSC – coordination on community engagement via the HOPE Board, working collaboratively to improve coordinated entry process, partnering on planning efforts for continuum of care options.
 - Linn Benton Lincoln Health Equity Alliance – direct engagement with their community meetings to shape and inform the HOPE recommendations that serve as a foundation for the Strategic Plan.
 - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Linn-Benton Chapter – engaging the Housing Committee to inform NAACP planned efforts over the next five years in fair housing impact work. Direct engagement with their community meetings to shape and inform the HOPE recommendations that serve as a foundation for the strategic plan.
 - Casa Latinos Unidos (CLU) – coordination with their staff to inform CLU expansion efforts into housing and supportive services over the next five years and strategic alignment of those action items.
- Leveraging the HOPE Board meetings and stakeholder engagement process for tri-county coordination:
 - In August and September 2023, a portion of the HOPE Board meeting was used to learn about housing and homelessness initiatives in Linn

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and Lincoln Counties. This gave an opportunity to share lessons learned and identify opportunities for coordination through regional agencies such as CSC and Continuum of Care (CoC).

Coordination challenges

The limited capacity of the community spread among a multitude of competing priorities has been the most significant challenge in coordination. Many service providers and partnering agencies are operating with minimal staff and resources. Taking time away from critical operations to participate in long-range planning can be challenging when communities are facing immediate needs and other obligations.

Coordination successes & opportunities

As described in the Lessons Learned section above, much of the work of the Coordinated Office has been investigating and identifying the relationships between the key participants in housing and homelessness services and policy development. This process has helped identify opportunities for system improvement and avoided redundancy. For example, prior to becoming a HB 4123 community, Benton County and City of Corvallis staff began researching Coordinated Entry and its role in Benton County's response to homelessness. Staff invited agencies from other jurisdictions who had integrated Coordinated Entry into their communitywide response to homelessness to provide educational presentations to service providers within the Benton County service area. Staff then began learning about the role of Coordinated Entry in Benton County and potential to align referrals and prioritization processes, with the ultimate goal to improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Benton County partnered with X4 Health to use their ROCKit model to engage Benton County in a strength-based problem-solving model leveraging the community's existing connections to inventory local gaps and assets for the development of a Coordinated Entry system that improves service provider and client participation. This process supported the development of a monthly case conferencing meeting with a wide representation of service providers supporting individuals at risk of or

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experiencing homelessness. Case conferencing supports streamlined coordination of resources and improved partnerships across the service area.

This research into Coordinated Entry also identified opportunities to coordinate with the ROCC and build better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a CoC and how these interrelate with other agencies. This improved understanding identified specific challenges that came with the lack of local control required to develop a locally responsive Coordinated Entry system. This process helped initiate a discussion led by CSC to explore the formation of a Linn-Benton-Lincoln CoC.

As described in the Strategic Plan section and in the explanation of the Coordinated Office's regional coordination strategies (above), the process of identifying opportunities for collective impact has been a primary focus of the engagement and coordination with the homeless service provider network.

Using the overarching strategic priorities that organize Benton County's HB 4123 Strategic Plan, the Coordinated Office engaged the homeless service provider network and policy makers throughout Benton County to identify specific initiatives for each priority that would be undertaken over the next five years.

The organization of Benton County's HB 4123 Strategic Plan includes a five-year timeline for each initiative (Table Below) to identify outcomes and guide opportunities to coordinate efforts. This structure is intended to serve as a template and guide for iterative development of outcomes and timelines for each initiative. This template creates a framework for ongoing accountability and awareness, illustrating the interdependencies between projects (and the organizations) and the impacts one project has on other projects. This template will also serve as a foundational guide for the Coordinated Office's staff development of workplans by highlighting key milestones across the service area for strategic alignment and prioritization of work.

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As described in the Lessons Learned section above, homelessness is not any one agency’s sole responsibility. A Strategic Plan that can inform a community’s local and regional work while aligning the multiple levels of resources and initiatives extends beyond the scope of county government influence and the work of Benton County’s Coordinated Office. Defining shared outcomes for a wide range of efforts and investments with a similarly wide range of responsible parties has been the primary challenge in defining shared outcomes or metrics in Benton County’s HB 4123 Strategic Plan.

The Work: Actions – Projects – Progress	Partners	Timeline (includes dates and milestones/metrics)				
		FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
1. HB 5019 Community Plan	OHCS					
2. Data improvement: Improving systemwide implementation of Coordinated Entry to assess and prioritize our most vulnerable community members for housing.	Leads: CSC and ROCC Collaborating Agencies: ROCC, Coordinated Office, homeless service providers, housing providers, funders	Initiation of community project ROCKit ROCC evaluating CE assessment tool	Integrate equity into CE assessment tool and process.	Increase housing referrals taken from CE by %.		
3. Impact analysis of existing data: IHN Research Institute (IHR) with Samaritan, OSU, and CSC analysis of the needs of people experiencing homelessness.	Leads: IHRI, CSC, OSU	Data collection and analysis	Research Analysis Completed	Establish and implement annual data quality improvement measures. Integrate data into tri-county housing policy development	Perform annual data improvement process.	Perform annual data improvement process. ??Review housing policy outcomes using data comparison??

A significant success in the development of Benton County’s 5-Year Plan is the information gathered during the process to define shared outcomes. This information has helped inform the role that a county can effectively serve in a Coordinated Homeless Response System, specifically how the Coordinated Office can support Benton County’s response to homelessness.

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Initiatives such as Benton County's Coordinated Entry improvement process led to a communitywide understanding and ownership of the many components Benton County's homelessness services. These components involve all levels of the homeless response system; local, regional, state, and federal.

The creation of the HOPE Advisory Board centered Benton County's commitment to assuring that "*everyone* in Benton County has the opportunity to live in decent, safe, and affordable housing." The HOPE Policy Recommendations elevated the HOPE Advisory Board's values, specifically prioritizing efforts to:

- Prioritize vulnerable populations
- Promote community safety for all
- Promote racial and ethnic justice

Stipends are provided for HOPE Board members to increase engagement and support participation for communities of color, for people who have experienced homelessness, and the LGBTQI2S+ community. Specific strategic initiatives have been identified in the 5-Year plan to improve the accessibility of the educational and community engagement resources of the HOPE Advisory board.

In addition, Benton County's 5-Year Plan is organized based on the Update to the 10-Year Plan, HOPE Policy Recommendations, and the legislative requirements of HB 4123. By using these guiding documents as the foundation for the 5-Year Plan, Benton County's Coordinated Homeless Response prioritizes initiatives and investments that work to eliminate racial disparities and improve equitable access to resources for people experiencing homelessness. These strategies include efforts to improve coordination between culturally responsive community-based organizations and service providers and agencies who provide resources to people experiencing homelessness. This also includes the development of a Coordinated Entry system that includes appropriate training and an assessment tool that does not perpetuate racial disparities within Benton County's service area.

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The culturally responsive community-based organizations (CBO's) in Benton County have very limited capacity. Data provided by OHCS for HB 5019 showed an overrepresentation of Black and Native American communities in Benton County's homelessness population. More resources are needed to improve the cultural responsiveness of Benton County's homeless service network to reduce barriers for these communities to navigate in to permanent housing. This includes dedicated funding to support capacity building within culturally responsive community-based organizations to provide housing and homelessness services (e.g., housing navigation and case management).

Benton County's Coordinated Entry system improvement initiative led to the establishment of a monthly case conference with representation across Benton County's service area to help streamline prioritization and placement of people on the Coordinated Entry list. This has improved partnerships across the service area and improved coordination of housing referrals to reduce redundancies and the time that it takes to get a person into housing.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Benton County partnered with X4 Health to participate in ROCKit to support a countywide Coordinated Entry system improvement process.

Benton County has received support from OHCS via ICF for the implementation of the HB 5019 Community Plan

Monthly HB 4123 update meetings hosted by LOC have supported information sharing among Pilot communities' along with presentations from TA providers.

All the sources listed above have been helpful in coordinating at the local and regional level.

Benton County has staffing and previous planning efforts that other HB 4123 communities do not. In Benton County technical assistance would be best deployed

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directly to service providers such as culturally responsive community-based organizations, to build capacity and capabilities.

Benton County like other Oregon communities has a significant housing shortage. Benton County's vacancy rate remains between 1%-2%. Meeting the goals of Benton County's HB 4213 5-Year Plan and the HB 5019 Community Plan requires access to housing immediately or the immediate future. Technical assistance to support innovative housing and partnership models such as master-leases and landlord recruitment and retention is essential to utilize the current available housing resources to meet our local goals and the goals of the state.

DATA

Benton County coordinated with X4 Health to participate in ROCKit to support a Coordinated Entry improvement process. This process worked to improve homeless service provider use of Coordinated Entry. Improving service provider use of Coordinated Entry improves community data. Specifically, identifying the needs of those experiencing homelessness and barriers to appropriate housing. The level of vulnerability and the duration on the coordinated entry list helps identify community gaps in services informing prioritization of work and resources.

As a member of the ROCC, Benton County has limited authority/control to make changes to the methods and processes to collect homelessness data. For example, making changes to a Coordinated Entry assessment tool to improve engagement requires consensus across 26 counties. Responses to this challenge have been the creation of locally created data systems that create redundancies and complexity to local data. CSC's pursuit of forming a tri-county CoC (Linn, Benton and Lincoln), will reduce the barrier for improved data that is reflective of the community by enabling more local control over data collection methods and systems. This will help support the establishment of a shared prioritization and referral method for housing and

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services for most the vulnerable populations that is responsive to the service area for which the data is collected.

Additionally, Intercommunity Health Coordinated Care Organization (IHN-CCO) serving the Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties, has formed a Research Institute in partnership with Samaritan Health Service and Oregon State University to evaluate the health needs of people experiencing homelessness. This initiative will help inform the health impacts of homelessness and help inform development of shared outcomes.

The PIT count does not accurately reflect the area's true homeless population counts, and this number can be misleading when engaging the community to build awareness on the scope of Benton County's housing and homelessness needs. Furthermore, this can impact investments leading to inequitable allocation of resources across the state. Improving statewide understanding of the various sources of data and what this data communicates about housing and homelessness needs is an opportunity beyond the scope of Benton County's authority.

IDENTIFYING, ACCESSING AND ALIGNING FUNDS

Benton County's HB 4123 5-Year Plan includes specific strategies to align funding sources. These strategies include:

- Grant research and writing for funding to support opportunities internally within Benton County government and externally with community partners.
- Cross-jurisdictional coordination and collaboration with regional partners to improve communication and awareness, leverage resources, and build service provider organizational capacity with sustainable funding.
- Assess Continuum of Care framework for formation of tri-county CoC.
- Coordination and leveraging of resources across Benton County departments.

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In addition to these strategies, the dedicated county staffing for the planning and implementation of HB 4123 demonstrates a commitment from Benton County to support a coordinated homeless response system.

The strategies above are the methods the Coordinated Office will use to identify multiple funding sources based on the prioritization of the strategies within the 5-Year Plan.

The coordination required by HB 5019 to inventory local investments and funding sources and average service costs was an important first step in developing a model to inform how best to align funding coordination in Benton County. The Coordinated Office will build off this model to inform HB 5019 Community Plan implementation and identify future funding opportunities.

In addition, the flexibility of HB 5019 funding has provided an opportunity to identify specific gaps in the service area to inform development of programs that can be supported by these funds.

The Coordinated Office team includes a Grant Writer/Researcher. This position is part-time on a contract basis. Overall, the Grant Writer facilitates identification and application for funding opportunities that support the HOPE Advisory Board recommendations. This scope of work includes:

- Research, vet, and share relevant funding opportunities including government and private grants for both the County and local homeless services providers. The Grant Writer provides relevant upcoming grant opportunities to service providers on a regular basis and serves as a resource to answer questions and provide information.
- Support County and providers in completing grant applications including collecting and reviewing data, writing or editing content for application documents, creating and coordinating required grant attachments, and coordinating partners for input and support.
- Develop methods for tracking grant information, applications, and awards, and retaining institutional knowledge.

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- Identify capacity building needs for County and providers in the context of increasing ability to successfully apply for grants that align with the HOPE recommendations.

Benton County has allocated HB 4123 funding for hiring new staff (i.e. Project Manager and Grant Research and Writer) for the Coordinated Office.

Two permanent-hire, full-time staff and one contracted researcher/grant writer directly support HB 4123 efforts. One staff member serves as the HOPE Advisory Board coordinator and is funded 40% by the City of Corvallis; another staff member serves as project manager. The County currently has committed HB 4123 staff funding through June 2027.

The current funding gaps in Benton County's homeless services include, but are not limited to:

- Capital funding for PSH.
- Operational funding for supportive services at PSH locations.
- Capital funding for site acquisition to provide adequate space and amenities for a resource center that provides rapid response to the essential needs of the communities' most vulnerable and provides resource navigation for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Operational funding for emergency shelter services.
- Organizational capacity funding for culturally responsive organizations serving vulnerable populations to support housing and homelessness services in partnership with existing housing voucher programs.
- Flexible funding for basic needs for people navigating out of homelessness into housing (e.g. rental deposits, application fees, furniture, transportation, storage and moving costs).

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The Benton County CHRO relies on the following for engagement and communications related to our work: utilization of HOPE Advisory Board for community engagement, targeted outreach and engagement to cities governing bodies, and monthly working meetings with Executive Directors of housing and emergency sheltering providers. We also use the following tools: quarterly newsletter, as needed news & updates email listserv, social media campaigns, news releases, media interviews, regular website updates, quick facts/info sheets, community progress reports, and presentations at public meetings.

Successes include expanded reach of social media campaigns when collaborating with partner agencies to tag each other, share, and like/comment each other's posts as well as 343 newsletter subscriptions. Our continuing challenges are reducing stigma through communications campaigns alone and needing more dedicated staff time for additional targeted community engagement aimed at destigmatization, education, etc.

Our future strategies include:

- Utilize HOPE Advisory Board to improve communitywide awareness, build relationships, highlight partner achievements, and increase understanding of homelessness and its systemic causes.
- Develop Coordinated Office Communications Plan that includes rural-specific outreach strategies.
- Community events with partners and vendors to improve access to resources and to engage underserved communities, particularly communities of color.

ADDRESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES

Our strategies for addressing racial disparities include:

- Researching best practices for improving to access to housing and sustaining housing for communities of color led by Linn-Benton NAACP.

BENTON COUNTY

COORDINATED HOMELESS RESPONSE OFFICE (CHRO)

HB 4123 COORDINATED HOMELESS RESPONSE PILOTS – NOVEMBER 2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

- Improving access to housing and resources for underserved populations and for communities of color by supporting organizational capacity building at culturally specific providers.
- Expanding awareness and outreach regarding tenant rights to reduce housing discrimination and prevent evictions and to improve access to resources for fair housing support.
- Develop Landlord Engagement strategies that align with state and local priorities to increase access to units for most marginalized populations.
- Community events with partners and vendors to improve access to resources and to engage underserved communities, particularly communities of color.

Through the HB 4123 and HB 5019 planning and engagement process intentional outreach was conducted with the following organizations to inform the Strategic Plan and the Community Plan.

- Faith Hope and Charity: A CBO that works to improve the lives of underprivileged families by providing referrals, food, and shelter.
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians: The Siletz Tribal Housing Department's overall mission is to ensure that low-income Siletz Tribal Members can obtain housing that meet their needs, is affordable, and provides a safe, healthy living environment.

As part of this work we have strengthened our partnership with Casa Latinos Unidos: A CBO committed to strengthening the Latinx communities in Linn and Benton Counties through programs that support people in meeting their basic needs, build resilience and capacity through education and leadership development, and celebrate cultures.

Capacity of the service provider network is the most significant challenge in strengthening additional partnerships. Building a stronger relationship between direct service providers and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians is an opportunity identified to provide culturally responsive services within Benton County.

BENTON COUNTY

COORDINATED HOMELESS RESPONSE OFFICE (CHRO)

HB 4123 COORDINATED HOMELESS RESPONSE PILOTS – NOVEMBER 2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

CONNECTIONS TO PERMANENT HOUSING

Our strategies for creating and strengthening connections to permanent housing include:

- Case Conferencing implementation to improve successful housing referrals from Coordinated Entry.
- Improving system-wide implementation of Coordinated Entry to assess and prioritize our most vulnerable community members for housing.
- Improving access to housing navigation and resources for underserved populations and for communities of color by supporting organizational capacity building at culturally specific providers.
- Expanding awareness and outreach regarding tenant rights to reduce housing discrimination and prevent evictions and to improve access to resources for fair housing support.
- Increase capacity for outreach and rapid engagement to connect Medicaid beneficiaries to supportive services and housing.
- Solicit projects and allocate housing and community development funding annually.
- Assess organizational capacity to add housing locations for longer-term housing options.

APPENDICES

A. Benton County Coordinated Homeless Response System MOU

B. HOPE Policy Recommendations

Memorandum of Understanding

Coordinated Homeless Response System

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into by The CITY OF CORVALLIS, a municipal corporation of the State of Oregon, hereinafter referred to as City, and BENTON COUNTY, a political subdivision of the State of Oregon, hereinafter referred to as County, and Community Services Consortium, an intergovernmental entity, serving Linn, Benton, Lincoln counties and hereinafter referred to as CSC, jointly referred to as “Parties” or individually referred to as a “Party”.

I. Introduction

Like communities throughout Oregon and the United States, homelessness in Benton County has escalated in recent years and demands a comprehensive, coordinated response from the county, cities, and diverse community partners, leaders, and persons experiencing homelessness. BENTON COUNTY and the CITY OF CORVALLIS demonstrate a clear vision to coordinate their efforts on homelessness by bringing together existing providers, other partners and community members to elevate and strengthen existing work through the Home, Opportunity, Planning and Equity (HOPE) Advisory Board (“HOPE Board”). The County has signed a grant (“Grant”) agreement with the State of Oregon awarding the County one-time funding to establish a coordinated homeless response system to operationalize and strengthen the communities’ homeless response efforts. The Grant agreement is entered pursuant to the terms of HB 4123.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this MOU is to establish an effective framework for collaboration among the Parties for the development of a coordinated homeless response system (“System) for Benton County, pursuant to Oregon House Bill 4123 (2022). The System shall, at minimum, consist of a homeless response office (the “Coordinated Office”) and a Homeless Response Advisory Board (the “Advisory Board”).

III. Definitions

- IV. Coordinated Homeless Response Office (“Coordinated Office”):** Coordinated homeless response office with a centralized point of contact as required by HB 4123 Section 1. (1)(a) & (e).
- V. Coordinated Office Advisory Board:** Coordinated homeless response advisory board with representation from the governing body of each Party, for the purposes of providing general guidance to the Coordinated Office as required by HB 4123 Section 1. (1)(b).
- VI. Stakeholder Coordination Board:** Board responsible for stakeholder coordination and partnership development as required by HB 4123 Section 1. (5) (a-o). The HOPE Advisory Board is designated as the Stakeholder Coordination Board.
- VII. Strategic Plan:** 5-year strategic plan that will identify and set goals for addressing:
- a. Funding to support the ongoing operations of the coordinated homeless response system.
 - b. Increasing or streamlining resources and services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness within the Parties’ jurisdictions.

- c. Incorporating national best practices for ending homelessness.
- d. Eliminating racial disparities within homeless services within the service area.
- e. Creating pathways to permanent and supportive housing that is affordable to local populations experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Parties, on the terms and conditions set forth herein, and consideration of which the existence and sufficiency is mutually acknowledged, agree to the following:

IV. Obligations of the parties

- i. The County will:
 - a. Serve as the fiscal agent responsible for administration and distribution of Grant funds in compliance with the Grant agreement.
 - b. Convene Parties and facilitate work for implementing HB 4123.
 - c. Oversee the HOPE Board.
 - d. Select two individuals to serve as voting members on the Coordinated Office Advisory Board. One member should be a Commissioner of the Board of Commissioners and one member should be the County Administrator or their designee. The County will solely determine how and when its Coordinated Office Advisory Board members are selected and replaced over time.
- ii. The City will:
 - a. Assign City staff representatives to attend and participate in HB 4123 implementation meetings.
 - b. City staff will provide updates to their respective elected bodies.
 - c. Select two individuals to serve as voting members on the Coordinated Office Advisory Board. One member should be the Mayor or a City Councilor and one member should be the City Manager or their designee. The City will solely determine how and when its Coordinated Office Advisory Board members are selected and replaced over time.
- iii. The CSC will:
 - a. Assign agency staff to attend and participate in HB 4123 implementation meetings.
 - b. Serve as liaison between Parties and the Rural Oregon Continuum of Care.
 - c. Select one individual to serve as a voting member on the Coordinated Office Advisory Board. The member should be the Executive Director or their designee. CSC will solely determine how and when its Coordinated Office Advisory Board member is selected and replaced over time.

V. Agreement

- i. This MOU shall become effective when signed by all Parties hereto and will continue until terminated by the parties.
- ii. The Parties agree to:
 - a. Operate under the general policy guidance of the City Manager(s), County Administrator and their respective elected bodies.

- b. Cooperate in good faith to ensure that the requirements as specified in HB 4123 are met, at minimum to include,
 - i. Development of the Coordinated Office and ongoing participation in it.
 - ii. Development of the Coordinated Office Advisory Board and ongoing participation in it.
 - iii. Development of a 5-year "Strategic Plan".
 - 1. Funding to support the ongoing operations of the Office.
 - 2. Leveraging resources and services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
 - 3. Incorporating national best practices for ending homelessness.
 - 4. Creating pathways to permanent and supportive housing that is affordable to local populations experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
 - iv. Development of Party obligations to support the Advisory Board and Office and ongoing support of those Party obligations.

VI. General Terms of MOU

- a. Non-Binding Agreement This document is not intended to create legal relations or to constitute a legally binding contractual agreement between or among the Parties. Nothing in this MOU is intended to impose any legal relationships, rights, duties, sanctions or liability on any Party, or to be the subject of litigation.
- b. Governing Provisions The parties acknowledge that the undertakings of any Party, or designee, under this MOU will be subject to the laws, rules, and internal administrative and personnel policies governing the conduct of the party.
- c. Joint Undertakings The parties agree to undertake the activities and to fulfill the responsibilities as described in this MOU in good faith and in a professional manner, to the extent possible given prevailing operating environments. Performance under this MOU is subject to availability to the Parties of funds and human resources.

VII. Declaration

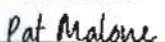
The Parties, by the signature below of their authorized representative, hereby acknowledge they have read this non-binding MOU, attest they understand it, and declare their intention to work collaboratively together to the best of their ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto each herewith subscribe the same.

BENTON COUNTY

DocuSigned by:


 Nancy Wise, Chair _____
 Date

DocuSigned by:


 Pat Malone, Commissioner _____
 Date

DocuSigned by:
Xanthippe Augerot
Xanthippe Augerot, Commissioner Date

Reviewed as to Form

DocuSigned by:
Vance M. Cronley
County Counsel Date

CITY OF CORVALLIS

Mark W. Shepard 9/28/2022
Mark Shepard, City Manager Date

Review to as to Form

[Signature] 09/28/2022
City Attorney Date

COMMUNITY SERVICES CONSORTIUM

[Signature] 09/29/2022
Pegge McGuire, Executive Director Date

Memorandum of Understanding

Coordinated Homeless Response System

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into by The CITY OF PHILOMATH, a municipal corporation of the State of Oregon, hereinafter referred to as City, and BENTON COUNTY, a political subdivision of the State of Oregon, hereinafter referred to as County, and Community Services Consortium, an intergovernmental entity, serving Linn, Benton, Lincoln counties and hereinafter referred to as CSC, jointly referred to as "Parties" or individually referred to as a "Party".

I. Introduction

Like communities throughout Oregon and the United States, homelessness in Benton County has escalated in recent years and demands a comprehensive, coordinated response from the county, cities, and diverse community partners, leaders, and persons experiencing homelessness.

BENTON COUNTY and the CITY OF PHILOMATH demonstrate a clear vision to coordinate their efforts on homelessness by bringing together existing providers, other partners and community members to elevate and strengthen existing work through the Home, Opportunity, Planning and Equity (HOPE) Advisory Board ("HOPE Board").

The County has signed a grant ("Grant") agreement with the State of Oregon awarding the County one-time funding to establish a coordinated homeless response system to operationalize and strengthen the communities' homeless response efforts. The Grant agreement is entered pursuant to the terms of HB 4123.

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VII. **Strategic Plan**: 5-year strategic plan that will identify and set goals for addressing:

- a. Funding to support the ongoing operations of the coordinated homeless response system.
- b. Increasing or streamlining resources and services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness within the Parties' jurisdictions.

- c. Incorporating national best practices for ending homelessness.
- d. Eliminating racial disparities within homeless services within the service area.
- e. Creating pathways to permanent and supportive housing that is affordable to local populations experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

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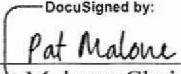
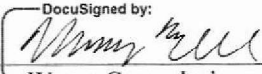
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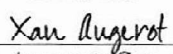
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BENTON COUNTY

<p>DocuSigned by:  <hr/> Pat Malone, Chair</p>	<p>04/28/2023 <hr/> Date</p>
<p>DocuSigned by:  <hr/> Nancy Waples, Commissioner</p>	<p>04/28/2023 <hr/> Date</p>

DocuSigned by:


Xan Augerot, Commissioner

05/01/2023

Date

Reviewed as to Form

DocuSigned by:


Vance Cronney, County Counsel

04/28/2023

Date

CITY OF PHILOMATH

DocuSigned by:


Chris Workman, City Manager

05/09/2023

Date

Review to as to Form

City Attorney

Date

COMMUNITY SERVICES CONSORTIUM



Pegge McGuire, Executive Director

May 9, 2023

Date

HOPE Advisory Board Policy Recommendations from Spring 2021

Vision: everyone in Benton County should have the opportunity to live in decent, safe, and affordable housing.

Values: all of these policy recommendations to the City of Corvallis and Benton County support the HOPE Board's overarching goal to transition people out of homelessness. These recommendations are grounded in a data-driven approach, are supported by research on successful systems, reflect gaps in our system of housing and services, are informed by community feedback that includes clients experiencing homelessness, and prioritize our vulnerable populations, community safety for all, and racial and ethnic justice.

Background: In summer of 2020, the HOPE Board conducted a [gap analysis](#) of all available services in Corvallis and greater Benton County. The Board collected all available [data](#) from homeless service providers and social service providers working to prevent homelessness to understand where we have safety concerns, racial and ethnic inequalities, and vulnerable populations. Finally, the Board researched successful [systems](#) of housing and supportive services to transition people out of homelessness. In Fall 2020, the Board prioritized [four main topic areas](#) based on this data-driven, systems-level approach with a focus on equity:

- 1) Align and coordinate existing services with a focus on improving data collection and collaboration for individuals experiencing homelessness or in behavioral health crisis;
- 2) Establish a sheltering system for all populations that is accessible 24/7/365 days per year, as well as a Resource Center to support coordinated entry into publicly funded assistance programs;
- 3) Expand transitional options for housing with a focus on notice, communication, and engagement with neighborhoods and the larger community; and
- 4) Increase permanent supportive housing to provide stable housing for our chronically homeless community members.

Community Engagement: in November and December 2020, the Board engaged the community throughout Benton County to receive feedback on these four priority topics. The [public feedback](#) directly shaped these draft policy recommendations to incorporate community sentiments on these topics. Public engagement included online surveys, multiple virtual meetings specifically dedicated to HOPE feedback, Board attendance at various community meetings to include different sectors and perspectives, and in-person client surveying conducted by nine service providers in Benton County serving individuals in need or experiencing homelessness.

In April 2021, the Board received community feedback on the final draft of policy recommendations. Community feedback was provided via survey on the HOPE community engagement [website](#) in April 2021 and at a virtual public forum on Tuesday April 13th from 4-6pm. Homeless service providers at four different locations supported in-person focus groups with clients experiencing homelessness to provide their perspective on these draft recommendations.

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Overview of Public Feedback and Edits to Draft Recommendations in Spring 2021

The Board did not conduct community engagement in April 2021 on the first three recommendations focused on capacity to implement the twelve policy recommendations. We have reorganized to highlight these three organizational, funding, and state-level components at the beginning.

- A. Organizational capacity is essential to facilitate and further develop these recommendations in partnership with community-based organizations. Organizational capacity also needs to be built within social service organizations to manage and provide the services over the long term.
- B. Funding recommendations
- C. Legislative Advocacy for statewide leadership and funding

Messaging on these first three critical components for implementation (A, B, C) is key based on the public feedback.

Original Policy Recommendations – summary of public feedback and April 2021 edits

1. Facilitate and coordinate data improvement efforts with community partners.
 - a. Public feedback: the most supported recommendation.
 - b. Changes made: none.
2. Work with providers to create metrics to measure program success.
 - a. Public feedback: well-supported, no changes needed.
 - b. Changes made: none.
3. Adopt the Hub Model of care coordination as a framework for doing business that coordinates existing partners to provide the best possible service to individuals.
 - a. Public feedback: the term “Hub Model” is not well understood, more explanation is needed of this model. Clients and service providers would like the flexibility for individuals to be able to attend a meeting like this if they want to and can. A pre-meeting between clients and their case manager before the main meeting can gauge the person’s desired outcomes and needs.
 - b. Changes made: describing the meeting and its purpose instead of using the term “hub” since it has confused clients and the general community. Adding flexibility to allow for the client to attend if they would like to be present.
4. Paid, full-time staff are needed as case managers to support people transitioning out of homelessness. Case managers should have commensurate experience and background that reflects the people they are serving from a cultural perspective and based on lived-experience.
 - a. Public feedback: clarify the city/county role and the need for case managers all over the county.
 - b. Changes made: wording edited to clarify the city/county role and the need for more case managers in Corvallis and throughout the county.
5. Pursue the feasibility and implementation of a crisis response team.

- a. Public feedback: resounding support for the concept. Lots of support for a non-law enforcement response and lots of support for a co-response with mental health and law enforcement together. Lots of questions about the data on this need.
 - b. Changes made: add a data collection recommendation to understand the magnitude of the need for crisis response and potential cost savings from this model. Add a co-response recommendation based on public feedback.
- 6. Benton County needs a 24/7/365 Emergency Sheltering System for all populations with onsite resources at any shelter location to transition people out of homelessness.
 - a. Public feedback: many worries about attracting people here/being a magnet for services, location(s) that don't negatively impact businesses, neighborhoods, and parks, having a requirement to work on transitioning/self-sufficiency/responsibility once stabilized. The urgency of a place for tent and car campers to go – from the client and community-wide perspectives. If folks can stay here 24/7 while they work on transitioning, let's call this a shelter system instead of an emergency shelter.
 - b. Changes made: terminology updated to remove "emergency" from the Sheltering System title since individuals will be assigned that bed space for a period of time while they work with a case manager (they do not have to leave during the day like the historical emergency shelter locations). Major addition: a recommendation about the most urgent need being a place to move tent and vehicle campers where it is not illegal so they can stabilize and work on transitioning out of homelessness.
- 7. Facilitate and support the creation of a Resource Center.
 - a. Public feedback: lots of confusion about whether or not this already exists. Lots of fear about tax increases to fund it. Sentiment about attracting people here and only wanting to help people "from here." Need to stress the statewide advocacy for funding for all counties to provide services.
 - b. Changes made: updated description to address transit needs and working toward self-sufficiency.
- 8. Establish referral pathways to transitional and permanent housing resources for serious criminal offenders (sex offenders, felony convictions, etc.).
 - a. Public feedback: people misinterpreted this wording to think that the Board wanted a pipeline of ex-convicts to find housing here.
 - b. Changes made: edited wording to mention criminal history AND other history that makes it difficult to secure housing. More investigation needed to understand the magnitude of the need and explore solutions.
- 9. Routine communication, notice, and community involvement need to happen on the topic of homelessness services.
 - a. Public feedback: community would like a way to give feedback directly to city and county instead of only to service providers. They would like accountability in funding decisions based on community feedback.
 - b. Changes made: added in a recommendation to create a mechanism for public feedback directly to city and county about funding for social service providers.
- 10. Increase development or acquisition of affordable housing units for permanent supportive housing (PSH) by 20 new units per year for the next eight years to add at a minimum 160 new units of PSH in Benton County. "New" can be new construction or conversion of existing units to

PSH units. PSH is necessary for a small portion of our unhoused community who need permanent support to remain stably housed.

- a. Public feedback: worries about increased utility, water, and property tax bills.
 - b. Changes made: updated terminology to indicate new funding sources from grant opportunities that already exist but that the county has not had the staffing capacity to apply for, disburse, oversee, and manage.
11. Increase available rental/income assistance options.
- a. Public feedback: lots of general support. Some worries about increased utility, water, and property tax bills. The need for overall messaging about how rental support/vouchers are funded is important.
 - b. Changes made: none.
12. Increase supportive services and stable funding streams to provide services to residents at more affordable housing locations.
- a. Public feedback: some worries about increased utility, water, and property tax bills. The need for overall messaging about how these services are funded is important.
 - b. Changes made: none.

Recommendations to Implement Policies

The following three recommendations (A, B, C) apply to recommendations 1-12. The Board did not do community engagement on the first three recommendations to implement the policy recommendations.

- A. Organizational capacity is needed to work on and implement these recommendations, and organizational capacity needs to be built within social service organizations to manage and provide the services.
1. **Organizational capacity to implement these recommendations means prioritizing homelessness and pro-active housing solutions within existing city and county departments and increasing capacity with additional staff to work on, coordinate, and implement these recommendations on homelessness** (whether that capacity is built internally or contracted out). No new solutions can be successfully implemented without new staff whose job it is to work on the topic of homelessness. The following functions are needed to implement these recommendations: project management, coordination and outreach, land use planning, and grants management (grant writing, contracting, grant administration, oversight, reporting).
 - i. Specifically, a team is needed to research and pursue sites for sheltering, permanent supportive housing, and service locations. The type of work that DLR has done for the Criminal Justice Systems Improvement Project is needed to research sites, zoning, and other parameters to provide site-specific options for city/county leadership and service providers to make informed choices about where to locate the different components of a sheltering system, resource center, transitional living options, and permanent supportive housing.
 - ii. Coordination capacity is needed to routinely convene city and county staff (and community based organizations) who all interact with individuals who are experiencing homelessness: parks, public works, health department, community development department, fire, and police. For example, health department staff give out tents and supplies that are being thrown away by parks staff.
 - iii. This increased capacity to manage homeless issues by the City and County also includes directing departments to prioritize coordination internally on the topic of homelessness by making homeless response part of their annual work plan.
 - iv. Regional outreach and coordination with adjacent cities and counties is needed to provide communication, collaboration, and regional approaches to addressing homelessness.
 2. **Invest in building organizational capacity at organizations that can manage all components of these recommendations** and work to support and successfully transition people out of homelessness. Invest in building organizational capacity by supporting and collaborating with groups that have demonstrated efforts to provide services in Benton County. If no local organizations wish to build and grow organizational capacity, recruit an organization to Benton County who can provide these services.
 - i. Other suggestions: expand the capacity of organizations that successfully are stabilizing people by adding microshelters at their locations. For example, Community Outreach Inc.

(COI), Corvallis Housing First (CHF), and Unity Shelter have successful models of housing case management to transition people out of homelessness. Increase their capacity with funding for positions and microshelters at available locations.

- ii. Capacity must be built for organizations to serve Benton County residents outside of Corvallis.

B. Funding recommendations

Explore state, federal, and private funding to expand organizational capacity to work on these topics and to fund the implementation and permanent provision of all these recommended services. In partnership with providers, assess current funding streams to ensure funding is not being taken away from existing services but that additional funding is pursued. Allocate resources to organizations that work toward implementing these policy recommendations. Prioritize resource allocation based on community feedback.

1. Grant writing capacity at the city/county is needed to access additional funds that are available but are not being applied for.
2. County pursue additional funds from Community Development Block Grant in county areas and in partnership with municipalities who have not explored this funding option.
3. County explore SAMHSA funding for transitional housing for individuals with a behavioral health diagnosis who do not fall into the SPMI population, new Transient Lodging Tax funding, and private foundations such as Meyer Memorial Trust, Oregon Community Foundation, McKenzie River Gathering, and Benton Community Foundation. If the state-controlled Medicaid 1115 waiver allows funding for housing case managers, county pursue additional capacity for housing case managers.
4. County explore cost/benefit of adopting a Construction Excise Tax. Local jurisdictions can levy a tax of up to 1 percent of the permit value on residential construction, and levy a tax with no cap on the permit value of commercial and industrial construction. For instance, the City of Corvallis levies a tax of 1% on residential construction and 1.5% on commercial and industrial construction. State law governs how the revenue can be used. Some is restricted for uses such as developing affordable housing and providing down payment assistance, and some is unrestricted.
5. Allocate local and state resources to programs that work to implement these recommendations.
6. Prioritize investment based on public feedback and cost effective allocations of limited public resources. The community supports the following options (beyond just normal brick-and-mortar housing) in the following descending order:
 - i. Microshelters
 - ii. Emergency shelter
 - iii. RV/car camping
 - iv. Tent camping.

C. Legislative Advocacy

1. County and City elected officials must continue to advocate for statewide leadership on local requirements for shelter beds in each county with accompanying state funding to support those required beds. This state requirement and funding is needed to address worries about migration of people to areas with services from other areas.
2. State and federal funding for all of these topics must continue to be advocated for by city and county elected officials and by the League of Cities and Association of Counties once these recommendations are adopted.
3. City and County explore partnership with OSU and counterparts in Lane County (Lane, Eugene, Springfield, and University of Oregon) to lobby for a state law allowing local tax revenue from Pac-12 events and on-campus sales to address the affordable housing impacts from the university population. The tax revenue would be split between the universities and the local municipalities to fund subsidized housing for low-income students and affordable housing for the surrounding community.

Policy Recommendations to the City of Corvallis and Benton County Spring 2021

1. Facilitate and coordinate data improvement efforts with community partners.

Description: Work with providers to improve data collection/tracking and to reduce duplicative data entry and data management. Data collection efforts will include a human services coalition model that is a statewide model: service providers come together to say what their priorities are and how they would implement them. Implementation is recommended immediately and could be accomplished with an existing staff person.

Background: coordinated data collection and analysis of community-wide data support communities' efforts to end homelessness by understanding which individuals continue to cycle into homelessness and which providers and partners continue to interact with them. Best practices from a trauma-informed care perspective are to reduce the number of times an individual must recount their history and circumstances to access assistance.

2. Work with providers to create metrics for successful program goals.

Description: successful program metrics assist with tracking which services deploy successful interventions in transitioning people out of homelessness. Implementation can be immediate with existing staff person.

Background: success metrics will help funders understand the value of their funding decisions, help us communicate with the community, and allow us to continually adapt and refine services to achieve the desired transition from homelessness for as many people as possible.

3. Prioritize collaboration and coordination of providers and partners with routine meetings for improved care coordination facilitated by a full-time staff member.

Description: The HOPE Board recommends convening providers and partners at routine meetings to coordinate care for individuals with high and complex needs on a case-by-case basis. The purpose of this coordination is to bring together partners to improve the lives of individuals who are interacting with multiple systems. This model of care coordination has been referred to as “case conferencing,” Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE), and also the Situation Table (previously referred to as the “Hub model” of care coordination). The Board researched these models to make an informed decision to recommend the Situation Table model.

Implementation: can be done immediately if an existing staff person is available, until an FTE can be budgeted for this role. The staff position to coordinate these meetings should be full-time and could be a health navigator, case manager, community health worker, or program coordinator. This same staff position is needed to do an assessment of funding streams: with input from city/county and providers, to assess all available funding streams coming into Benton County (including Corvallis) that fund this work to blend funding streams.

Geographic service area suggestion: the details and frequency can be decided by the participants, but based on public feedback we recommend having routine meetings for Corvallis-centric clients, South Benton clients, and Philomath/West Benton clients (and other geographic regions as needed).

Background: Hub spokes needed at the table should be diverse and culturally-versed: Benton County Health Department (BCHD), Corvallis Daytime Drop-in Center (CDDC), Unity Shelter, Community Outreach Inc. (COI), Unity Shelter, Corvallis Housing First (CHF), the Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV), Samaritan, Inter-community Health Network-Coordinated Care Organization (IHN-CCO), Jackson Street Youth Services (JSYS) when needed, the state Department of Health Service (DHS), Tribal liaisons, case managers, Casa Latinos Unidos (CLU), Philomath Community Services (PCS), South Benton Food Pantry (SBFP), Job training/vocational rehab, law enforcement/first responders, crisis response team members, Street Outreach Response Team (SORT) members, social security/disability advocacy, faith-based community volunteers, Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative to do system-level coordination, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG). Any other provider who can provide access to services for a person in need.

4. Collaborate with social service and health care partners to increase the number of paid, full-time case managers to support people transitioning out of homelessness.

Description: there is a need for more case managers with experience and backgrounds that reflects the people they are serving from a cultural perspective and based on lived-experience.

- a. County: work with IHN-CCO and Samaritan on workforce capacity for housing case managers, peer support specialists, and social service providers to utilize funding from Medicaid and SAMHSA block grant resources.

- b. County: in addition to increased case managers in Corvallis, rural areas outside of Corvallis also need additional mobile/regional staff to support people’s housing needs and transition out of homelessness.
- c. City and county work with OSU, LBCC, and any other local educational institutions on expanding internship workforce capacity from student populations.

Background: case management is vital to support the transition out of homelessness. Not enough case managers are available in our community to support the need.

5. Pursue implementation of a crisis response team and collect data on the scope and scale of need for crisis response.

Description: HOPE recommends a non-police intervention for crisis situations due to homelessness and behavioral health issues. A co-response with behavioral health professionals and law enforcement is also needed depending on the situation. Coordination with street outreach and harm reduction is vital to ensure collaboration with overlapping populations.

Background: HOPE’s research, data, and community feedback fully support ongoing efforts to implement a Crisis Response Team to redirect calls from law enforcement and provide team partnerships with law enforcement when an officer is necessary. We recognize that ongoing efforts are occurring with the Criminal Justice Systems Improvement project and the Willamette Criminal Justice Council. We recommend continuing to pursue implementation in those existing forums with experts on the topic of crisis response.

6. Provide organizational capacity to facilitate and coordinate providers in establishing a 24/7/365 Sheltering System for all populations with onsite resources at shelter locations to transition people out of homelessness.

This organizational capacity is needed to determine possible sites for sheltering, the logistics of implementation, and the ongoing funding from sources that minimize the use of general fund dollars. (See the first recommendation A for details on the organizational capacity needed in the form of project coordination, project management, land use planning, and grant writing.)

Description: any shelter needs space for warming/cooling from the elements during the day. Individuals are assigned a bed space that is theirs 24/7 while they work with a case manager on transition. Emergency sheltering 24/7/365 with onsite resources is referred to as a “navigation center” in pending legislation (HB 2004 and HB 2006, 2021 Session).

- a. **We recommend the following six components of a sheltering system to address safety concerns for different populations:** congregate male, congregate female, non-congregate sheltering (like motel rooms or microshelters), managed tent camping, managed car/RV/trailer camping, and mobile service delivery to alternate locations. The team working to implement this sheltering system should look at available current and historic data to fine-tune the recommended estimates.
- b. **Initial Estimates of Need for Sheltering are as follows:**

1. **Women:** 40 congregate beds based on historical data from the women's shelter. This estimate includes the existing 20-25 beds at the women's shelter which may not be able to remain in its existing location and cannot operate 365 days/per year at that location given youth programming.
2. **Men:** 60 congregate beds based on historical data from the men's shelter. This estimate includes the capacity at the men's location which may not be able to remain in its existing location given flood plain concerns and space constraints.
3. **Non-congregate sheltering units** for people who cannot be in men/women dorms (non-binary and trans individuals, couples, people who cannot be in congregate settings due to medical fragility or behavioral health disorders, people with pets, and family units): 40 units based on HOPE survey data on trans and non-binary needs and feedback from providers regarding couples and individuals with a child. We recommend single-unit sheltering options, such as motel room style units and/or microshelters, to provide this non-congregate capacity. The microshelter design needs to be expanded to accommodate a double bed or bunk beds for couples and family units.
4. **RV/Trailer and car camping:** we do not have a good estimate of this need based on our current data system. At Pioneer Park, 30 applications (representing about 60 people) were submitted. At Pioneer Park, 15 RV spaces and 9 car spaces were occupied. All 11 spots at the Fairgrounds were full with 21 individuals camping in cars and RVs. Based on these locations alone, at least 40 RV and car camping spaces are needed.
5. **Managed Camping:** between 80-120 individuals are camping in close proximity to the hygiene center, on ODOT property, and in the skate park. These estimates may decrease with more available shelter beds. A site for managed tent and vehicle camping is the most urgent need based on feedback from folks experiencing homelessness, providers, and the broader community of business owners and other citizens.

Recommended components of a Sheltering System:

1. **Shelter Accessibility:**
 - a. Shelter is accessible 24/7/365.
 - b. Shelter is low barrier upon arrival to get individuals off the street. Options are available, but not required, for individual involvement to support the location while they work on transitioning, such as doing laundry, cleaning, or helping to provide food.
 - c. Necessary components at any emergency sheltering location: walking and biking access, public transportation access, and safety. Safety concerns for everyone involved need to be addressed. Security, lighting, fire code, and immediate access for emergency personnel must be considered.
2. **Shelter facilities and onsite services:** necessary services at any shelter location include showers, bathrooms, drinking water, food provided on-site (to minimize need to travel to multiple locations for food), laundry, wifi, lockers for items for those in congregate shelter, mail service, and office space for meeting with providers like a case manager, mental health and addiction support person, and someone who can help enroll people in assistance programs.

3. **Shelter is temporary** and is not a permanent housing solution. The duration of a person's stay will vary based on their needs, their progress with a case manager, and availability of an appropriate transitional or permanent option.
4. **A limited overflow area is needed** at any sheltering location for people who show up with a tent or car/RV. Tent and car/RV camping is time limited, and the individual must engage to transition to another option. RV sites must have gray and black water dump hookups for appropriate hygiene. The overflow area is under the supervision of the host organization.
5. **Hygiene and basic needs services accessible to any individuals**, even those not staying in the shelter system: an area for warming/cooling from the elements where someone can be 365 days/year who is experiencing homelessness to minimize the need to go to multiple locations throughout the day to stay warm or get cool. There must be hygiene facilities, wifi, lockers, and food services that are accessible to individuals to balance the negative impacts on our natural areas and waterways for those without access to basic hygiene.
6. **Definitions:**
 - a. **Managed Emergency Tent Camping:** a specific, designated area where emergency camping in tents is under the direct control of an organization with boundaries, amenities, and direct supervision. The organization provides tents and pallets to elevate the tents and is responsible for the condition of tents. The organization designates tent placement with consideration for emergency service accessibility. Campers have access to hygiene, water, trash, and resources. To transition people out of tent camping, emergency tent camping has time limits for every individual camper with evaluation of that person's progress towards securing transitional or permanent housing on a case-by-case basis. Case management to work on transitioning to stable housing must be provided for all persons. The tent camping is limited in number based on staffing capacity to provide case management. Allowing an area for managed emergency tent camping will address the safety and environmental health concerns of unmanaged camping and allow for enforcement of illegal tent camping elsewhere.
 1. Unmanaged tent camping is not supported by the public feedback due to concerns of fire, individual safety, community safety, litter, noise, and visibility. Having a designated area for managed and supported camping addresses these community concerns.
 2. We recognize there are individuals who will not engage in case management to transition out of homelessness. Appropriate interventions need to be available for those who cannot engage due to behavioral health conditions, such as crisis response and respite. Pretrial justice services and additional jail capacity are needed for those who break the law. (We recognize there are current efforts to improve crisis response, respite, and additional criminal justice services.)
 - b. **Managed emergency RV, trailer, and car camping area:** a specific, designated area where emergency camping in vehicles is under the direct control of an organization.

The organization designates vehicle placement with consideration for emergency service accessibility. Vehicle campers have access to hygiene, water, trash, and resources. RV sites must have gray and black water dump hookups for appropriate hygiene. Mobile service delivery capacity can make it possible to support distributed sites at multiple smaller locations throughout the county.

Background:

- a. **Challenges:** implementing this recommended emergency sheltering system will take time, resources, and political will. There are challenges with site identification, concentration of populations living in poverty, and the need for separation of some populations for safety.
- b. **Leadership:** there needs to be collaboration of leadership with providers and with the city and county supporting project management for project design and site planning to insure the following issues are addressed:
 1. Geographic locations and siting options.
 2. Adequate public transportation schedule to support client needs.
 3. Service providers must be included as leaders to determine adequate spacing between populations. Suggestions from providers include separate floors, separate buildings, and/or microshelter rows for different populations.
 4. Capacity is needed to research and explore available geographic areas in Corvallis, the urban growth boundary around Corvallis, and the county areas surrounding the urban growth boundary to find all possible locations for the different components for a sheltering system.

Phased Implementation to bolster Emergency Sheltering System: all of the components outlined for an emergency sheltering system will take staff capacity and time to be implemented. While the city and county work to build the organizational capacity and sustainable funding to support the long-term vision of implementing these components, the city and county must facilitate and support the enhancement of service capacity for these most urgent needs:

1. The men's shelter must be open 24/7/365 with additional service providers meeting with men onsite to transition them to transitional or permanent supportive housing.
2. The City of Corvallis and County, in partnership with IHN, Samaritan, and other service providers, should facilitate building the capacity for mobile service delivery to distributed microshelters, RV/trailer/car camping, and managed tent camping locations. This mobile service delivery can serve populations both within Corvallis urban growth boundary and the greater Benton County areas that have expressed the need for access to services.
3. The most urgent need voiced by clients and providers is a safe place to locate their tent or vehicle so they can stabilize, access services, secure a job, and transition out of homelessness. Basic needs of safety, sleep, food, and hygiene need to be met first before people can work on transitioning out of camping. This is also the most urgent need voiced by community members who are housed – addressing the unmanaged tent and vehicle camping throughout the community by having a place for managed camping in tents and vehicles so they do not continue to disperse and move from one street or natural area to another.

[End of Emergency Sheltering recommendation]

7. Facilitate and support the creation of a Resource Center.

Description: the Resource Center should have office space for providers from different organizations to meet with people, enroll them in programs, and work on improving their economic stability with sufficient means to meet their needs. The city and county should facilitate and support the collaboration between the providers to choose the best location options and determine who will occupy and manage this Resource Center. Must have public transit, walking, and biking access. A dedicated shuttle service from shelter locations around the community will support access beyond just public transit.

- i. Ideal location: capacity is needed to research and explore available geographic areas in Corvallis, the urban growth boundary around Corvallis, and the county areas surrounding the urban growth boundary (similar to the work DLR has done for criminal justice components sites). Best options would be co-located adjacent to or very near some sheltering. Second best is very short walking distance. Also possible would be a shuttle system from shelter locations to the resource center.

Background: supporting co-location of service providers from multiple organizations decreases the travel and number of different locations people must go to meet their needs. Having some shared space at one location does not mean that an organization entirely relocates their operation. It means that representatives from different organizations are co-located to coordinate care in one location. Most clients have to travel to multiple places (between 5-10 different geographic locations) to enroll in the numerous programs available to them. The Resource Center can have office space for service providers like Community Services Consortium (CSC), Council of Governments (COG), United Way, county health navigators to enroll people in OHP, housing case managers to work on transitioning people out of homelessness, assistance with vital records (drivers license, social security card, etc.), assistance with applying for and accessing disability and social security income, job assistance, veterans programs, space for representatives from the Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence (CARDV), Jackson Street Youth Services (JSYS), Community Outreach Inc. (COI), Casa Latinos Unidos, Tribal liaison, NAACP representative, Unity Shelter, Corvallis Housing First, Linn Benton Housing Authority, other housing entities, state entities like DHS, etc.

8. Explore and investigate the need and the barriers to accessing housing for individuals and their families in our community whose past history has impacted their ability to secure housing.

Description: people with past criminal histories, bad credit scores, and previous evictions continue to be disqualified from housing and remain unhoused. Housing assistance for people with conviction histories is lacking once they do not qualify for support from county Parole and Probation.

Background: individuals with difficult histories end up living in their cars or RVs throughout the community. These individuals and their families are already a part of our community. There is a lack of data on the need for referrals for this population, although it is a known need based on provider feedback. Explore and investigate this issue further.

9. Provide routine communication, notice, and opportunities for community involvement on the topic of homelessness services.

Description: this recommendation has three components for two-way communication and community involvement:

- a. Routine monthly email updates that people can sign up to receive. These updates should include news and reports about services, community-based organizations, decisions made on the topic of homelessness, how to get involved, etc. Regional updates are needed that include all of Benton County. Corresponding updates can be posted and archived on the HOPE website. Implementation should be immediate.
- b. Quarterly public forum to provide verbal updates, answer community questions about recent updates, provide dialogue, and have a community conversation beyond the 10 minute comment period at each HOPE meeting. Recommend a minimum two hours. Implementation should be immediate.
- c. A notice requirement to neighborhoods and businesses with opportunities for involvement for any new services or new transitional locations approved or funded by the city or county. The intent of this notice and involvement requirement is to provide ample time and opportunity for community engagement.
 1. Organizations funded by the city or county or approved to provide social services or transitional housing must provide routine opportunities for two-way communication and a mechanism to provide feedback for neighbors and nearby businesses. City/county establish a mechanism for community members to provide feedback on services and organizations directly to the city and county provider (via email, website, and postal option) instead of only to the service provider. City/county track community feedback for improved accountability and to make informed decisions about future funding allocations. Organizations will forward any neighborhood feedback to city and county funders to evaluate future funding decisions and encourage resolving issues with neighbors.
 2. Community-wide notice should also be provided in the routine monthly community-wide communication.

10. Increase development or acquisition of affordable housing units for permanent supportive housing (PSH) by 20 new units per year for the next eight years to add at a minimum 160 new units of PSH in Benton County.

Description: permanent supportive housing (PSH) is necessary for a small portion of our unhoused community who need permanent support to remain stably housed. "New" units can be new construction or conversion of existing units to PSH units. Increasing PSH will decrease the number of chronically homeless individuals in the community and result in cost savings.

(<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Cost-Savings-from-PSH.pdf>)

- a. Develop a framework for awarding currently available grant funds that encourages, incentivizes, or requires, when possible, a certain percentage of PSH units in housing projects seeking affordable housing funding from the City of Corvallis.
 1. County pursue additional grant funding streams to increase PSH units in greater Benton County to implement this recommendation.
- b. Coordination with City and County Community Development (CD) Departments is necessary to support this work. CD Departments should actively facilitate and encourage local organizations' applications for grant funding and technical assistance from evidence-based approaches (for instance, state-level OHCS funding and technical assistance from The Corporation for Supportive Housing).
 1. County collaborate with other cities in the county to increase PSH units outside of Corvallis.
- c. City/county evaluate non-traditional zoning and code solutions to respond to the need for more permanent living options:
 1. Permanent tiny home villages.
 - a. Emerald Village in Eugene has 22 permanent tiny homes on 1.1 acres: <https://www.squareonevillages.org/emerald>
 - b. Peace village in development with 36 units on 1.7 acres: <https://www.squareonevillages.org/peace>
 2. Accessory dwelling units (ADU) should be made allowable and more easily achievable. (Corvallis already allows ADUs; county code changes are needed.)
 3. Motels converted to permanent living.

11. Increase available rental/income assistance options.

Description:

- a. Increasing the number of place-based section 8 assistance in Benton County is a priority. Linn Benton Housing Authority (LBHA) needs to include place-based assistance in their annual plan to accomplish this goal. Work with LBHA to increase projects in rural parts of Benton County in support of more affordable PSH projects like the newest one in Lebanon.
- b. City/county proactively pursue all sources of rent subsidies with community partners, including opportunities with the Veterans Administration, the state of Oregon, and rent subsidies. For example: establish a consistent resource to help people navigate the process to access social security and disability financial assistance. People with disabilities and elderly individuals are disproportionately represented in the homeless data. Programs like ASSIST and SOAR can be contracted with to expand the resources here to help people access disability and social security benefits.
- c. Engage with culturally specific and culturally responsive organizations to help connect communities of color to rental/income programs and ensure that program parameters are aligned with the needs of communities of color. Establish a consistent resource to coordinate with Tribal Housing Authorities to provide referrals and connect Native American individuals with Tribal resources, such as housing vouchers, assistance, and support services.

Background: place-based Section 8 assistance definition: the Section 8 program provides rent assistance to eligible households. The amount of the assistance varies with household income and is capped by HUD rules that define an area's "Fair Market Rent." The Section 8 Program can be delivered in two ways: as a voucher the recipient household uses to pay a portion of their rent, or as "placed-based" assistance in which the assistance is attached to a specific housing unit. The Section 8 voucher program involves being on a waiting list for years. Having to wait years for help doesn't work very well for people who are without housing now and have a disability that puts their health and well-being at risk. Place-based assistance works better than a voucher because an eligible person can move in as soon as there's a vacancy. For this reason, place-based Section 8 assistance is critically important to the development and provision of PSH.

12. Increase supportive services and stable funding streams to provide services to residents at more affordable housing locations.

Description:

- a. City and County facilitate and coordinate collaboration among community partner organizations to expand PSH units as part of their behavioral health responsibility. (Existing providers: DevNW, Commonwealth, Corvallis Housing First, county health staff.)
- b. County continue to facilitate increasing supportive services however possible by leveraging Medicaid funding for non-county staff to provide behavioral health support, case management, peer support, and counseling/medication assistance. Case management is the most critical component to prioritize.
 - i. County Alcohol and Drug resources can increase their in-the-field work to do diagnoses that will allow for more resources for case management following the 1115 waiver.
- c. County facilitate collaboration with Medicaid insurance (IHN-CCO) and Samaritan to support more behavioral health services onsite at more permanent supportive housing units.