

Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care

Requested Action and Recommendations Overview

Action: Austin/Travis County CoC Governance Structure Revisions

The Membership Council is requested to take action on the following items at its February 1, 2021 meeting:

- Approve the initial Homebase recommendations (see below for a summary of the recommendations) as the overall vision and to guide ongoing work needed to formalize and operationalize changes to the Austin/Travis County CoC governance structure
- Approve the creation of an ad hoc Governance Restructuring Workgroup and empower the workgroup with authority to operationalize recommendations (see Timeline, below)
- Approve the slate of members for the ad hoc Governance Restructuring Workgroup
 - Recommend no more than 7 members, with representatives from at least each of the following categories:
 - City of Austin Homeless Strategy Officer
 - Person with Lived Expertise of Homelessness
 - Current Membership Council member
 - Homeless Service Provider
 - ECHO

Overview of Governance Recommendations

Homebase developed several overarching recommendations to refine CoC governance in the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care:

- (1) **Revaluating the purpose of Membership Council** to allow focus on higher-level CoC issues (shifting away from details of NOFA) and homeless response system alignment.
- (2) **Being more intentional about the composition of the Membership Council**, including empowering historically underrepresented voices.
- (3) **Shifting of day-to-day CoC responsibilities** from the Membership Council to the CoC lead agency and a well-defined committee and workgroup structure.

- (4) **Formalizing and organizing Membership Council, committees, and workgroups** to foster healthy disagreement, work toward systemwide goals, and increase accountability, equity and diversity.

Membership Council

Membership and Representation

The size of Membership Council should **consist of no more than 11-15 voting members**, ideally maintaining an odd number. It should have designated seats for the following stakeholder groups: government (3 seats), homeless response system providers (2), health and/or disability services (1), mental health/substance abuse (1), education or workforce development (1), other funders (1), persons with lived expertise of homelessness (2), other (0-4).

Membership Council members should be leaders, local champions, and influential stakeholders in the community's efforts to end homelessness. Ensuring **equitable representation** should start at the Membership Council level, and be mirrored throughout all CoC entities, including committees, workgroups, and other decision-making bodies. Two seats on Membership Council should be reserved for people with lived expertise of homelessness, with a **requirement that at least one-fourth of all Membership Council members have lived expertise of homelessness**.

Membership Council Role

Membership Council should continue to serve as the HUD-required board for the Austin/Travis County CoC and provide high-level oversight and direction-setting to the overall Continuum, while handling three primary HUD-related responsibilities:

- (1) **Operating the CoC**, including: (a) setting Continuum-wide priorities; and (b) assigning written responsibilities to the CoC committees, workgroups, and lead agency, and providing oversight of their efforts.
- (2) **Designating and operating an HMIS**, by setting priorities for and overseeing the work of the HMIS Lead/administrator.
- (3) **Providing high-level oversight of the annual CoC competition**, including providing guidance on incorporation of CoC priorities and approving the CoC application prior to submission to HUD.

Other day-to-day responsibilities related to CoC requirements should be delegated to the CoC committees/workgroups and lead agency.

The Membership Council will develop a **CoC Roadmap** to become the **guiding document for the work of the CoC**, outlining the CoC's main goals and defining key strategies, objectives, partnerships, expected outcomes, and action items to make

progress on each of these goals. The proposed priority topics for the 2021-2022 Roadmap are:

- 1) Clarifying and refining Membership Council's role in the CoC and larger Austin homeless policy, including coordinating and supporting the Austin Action Plan to End Homelessness;
- 2) Increasing diversity and ensuring authentic input from BIPOC and people with lived expertise of homelessness;
- 3) Exploring greater Austin area regional homelessness coordination;
- 4) Updating the Austin Action Plan to End Homelessness; and
- 5) Developing best practices and building expertise around the homeless and housing-stabilization response systems.

The Membership Council will delegate authority to the committees and workgroups through **creating work plans for the committees**, based heavily on the CoC's Roadmap. The Membership Council will review the committee workplan progress on a quarterly basis. In addition, to support these efforts to provide adequate oversight to the work of the committees and workgroups, **Membership Council members will be expected to serve on at least one committee or workgroup.**

Membership Council Leadership

The Membership Council should continue to utilize its current officer structure of electing a Chair and Vice-Chair with set term limits as well as establish and follow a **clear succession plan** for grooming members of the Membership Council to step into these officer positions.

Membership Council Meetings

The Membership Council should move toward a **majority-rule voting model**, by which all decisions are made by a vote of all present voting members. If there is concern about a conflict of interest, it should be limited to **areas where decisions are directly related to funding or defunding specific projects** and should only apply to representatives of the funded entity.

ECHO

In its role as lead agency for the Austin/Travis County CoC, ECHO staff have expertise in the HUD CoC Program requirements and day-to-day experience of managing the CoC. ECHO should be **formally empowered to act as a strong coordinating body for the CoC.**

The best way to clearly define ECHO's role is to not only update the CoC's governance charter, but to draft a clear and comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

with the CoC. The MOU should outline all of ECHO’s responsibilities, including **authority to make certain decisions on behalf of the CoC.**

CoC Committees and Workgroups

CoC should preserve much of its existing committee/workgroup structure but make concerted efforts to **be more intentional about the composition of and delegation to the committees and workgroups.**

Committees will be empowered to make certain decisions on behalf of the CoC in alignment with the CoC Roadmap and corresponding work plans. This will require committees to have a **set voting membership, ideally mirroring the composition of the Membership Council in terms of varied stakeholder representation and diversity** (including members with lived expertise of homelessness). Each committee **must have at least one Membership Council member as part of its voting membership.**

The CoC should add two additional committees to its committee structure: a **Performance and Monitoring Committee**, charged with overseeing the CoC Program competition, including local scoring policy, and a **Coordinated Entry (CE) Committee** to make data-informed decisions related to CE and evaluate, monitor and strategically adjust CE policies and operations.

The workgroups will provide forums for topical subject-matter experts to work together to expand their knowledge, discuss issues, and problem solve. The CoC should work to **streamline the number of workgroups** wherever possible, including transitioning some committees to operating on an ad hoc basis.

Proposed Timeline and Next Steps

Body/Group	Date/Timeframe	Task Description
<u>Membership Council</u>	February 1, 2021 meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote to approve the initial Homebase recommendations to be used to instruct and guide ongoing work needed for formalize and operationalize changes. • Approve the creation of an ad hoc Governance Restructuring Workgroup and empower the workgroup with authority to operationalize recommendations (see tasks below) • Approve the slate of members for the ad hoc Governance Restructuring Workgroup

	February – April 2021	Membership Council continues to act as the primary decision-making body for the CoC while the Governance Restructuring Workgroup completes its tasks
	March 1, 2021	Recommended Action: Membership Council authorize an ad hoc CoC NOFA Committee to prepare for 2021 CoC NOFA Competition
<u>Governance Restructuring Workgroup (w/ Homebase support)</u>	February - March 2021	Design a member selection process and accompanying application for new Membership Council using the Governance Recommendations/Feedback documents.
	March 2021	Recruit for and open member application/selection process for the new Membership Council
	March – April 2021	Using the Governance Recommendations document, associated public comments and accompanying attachments as a guide, make/flesh out decisions related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss appropriate name for the new Membership Council • Clarifying and refining the new Membership Council’s role and purpose (Roadmap Topic 1) [see p. 10-11] • Committee/workgroup restructuring [see p. 14-16] • Role of general CoC membership (i.e. coalition/members/stakeholders) • Clarify role of ECHO Board
	March – April 2021	Update/draft proposed Governance Charter and accompanying Conflict of Interest Policy to reflect recommendations/workgroup decisions
	March – April 2021	Using recommendations and proposed governance charter as a guide, draft proposed MOU between the new Membership Council and ECHO to take effect after new Membership Council is seated

	April 2021	Following the member selection process, select a proposed slate of members for new Membership Council
<u>Austin/Travis County CoC</u>	April 2021	Full CoC membership/stakeholders meeting to approve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated governance charter • Proposed slate of new Membership Council members selected by the Governance Restructuring Workgroup
<u>New Membership Council</u>	May 2021	Hold first meeting as the primary decision-making body for the CoC. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Chair/Co-Chair • Approve/sign MOU with ECHO • Orientation/onboarding for all new members, including emphasis on authentic engagement of people with lived expertise of homelessness
	June - July 2021	Building on the Governance Restructuring Workgroup's efforts, develop 2021-2022 CoC Roadmap
	August 2021	Create corresponding work plans for each committee based on approved Roadmap
	2021-2022	Monitor committee workplans on a quarterly basis