Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care

Stakeholder Comments on Governance Recommendations

Below is a collection of the comments received on the draft Governance Recommendations. They were compiled from the public comment draft (google document), emails sent directly to Homebase, and follow-up phone calls with a few stakeholders. They are divided by section of the draft.

Comments are de-identified, but the general stakeholder category the commenter represents (government, homeless service provider, etc.) is indicated in brackets following the comment.

Comments marked by an asterisk (*) were deemed noncontroversial and incorporated into the updated recommendations document. Some small grammatical changes were suggested and incorporated into the recommendations, but are not noted in this document.

Background

- *Please define the CoC. This is a widely misunderstood term with more than one meaning [*Government*]

Overview of Recommendations

[No comments]

Membership Council

Membership Council Membership and Representation

- *Since [the list of representatives] is not an exhaustive or entirely inclusive list, I recommend using language that states these are some of the possible organizations from which to draw representatives. [*Government*]
- Edits to Representatives list:
  - Health
    - *Remove *Travis County EMS* (duplicative of first bullet) [*Government*]
    - *Add People's Community Clinic [*Collaborative Applicant*]
  - Education
    - *Add Austin Community College, Huston Tillotson University, UT Austin, St. Ed's, etc. [*Government*]
    - *There are several school districts in Austin/Travis County [*Government*]
  - Criminal Justice

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- - - *Add new Travis County Public Defender's Office, Travis County CJ Planning & Research [*Government*]
      - *Add Juvenile Justice (Travis County Juvenile Probation) [*Provider*]
    - Disability Services
      - *Add Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities, several others orgs in this category [*Government*]
    - Victim Services
      - *Add Refugees Services of Texas [*Provider*]
    - Veterans:
      - *Add Commission of Veteran Affairs [*Government*]
    - LGBTQ
      - *Add LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, allgo [*Government*]
    - Youth
      - *Add SAFE Alliance and Street Youth Ministry [*Government*]
    - Other
      - *Add Goodwill [*Government*]

- *"Board" and "Membership Council" seem to be used interchangeably – this might be confusing, and misconstrued as the ECHO (nonprofit) Board & Officers (Membership Council doesn't currently have Officers, outside the 2 Co-Chairs) [*Government*]

- *Explain reference to (federal) HUD CoC Grant program . . . the term "CoC" continues to be used in different ways [*Government*]

- Does this recommendation [that voting be restricted for only those people seated as voting members] mean open meetings would allow for non-voting members to take part in the discussion? Should this be formalized – a time to hear from non voting stakeholders in each agenda –or allowed as it arises organically? [*Government*]

- 15 members on the Membership Council is too large; keeping it to 10 is better otherwise the group is literally moving back to where it was several years ago in terms of make-up and decision making. [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "To ensure cohesion and promote efficiency, the size of Membership Council should be set at a manageable level, consisting of no more than 11-15 voting members, ideally maintaining an odd number." [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "The Membership Council meetings should remain open and function in a transparent environment, but voting should be restricted for only those people seated as voting members." [*Government*]

- Oppose recommendation "To avoid confusion, we recommend the elimination of the "advisory" member seats that are currently part of the Membership Council structure." [*Government*]
    - Clearly delineating voting from non-voting members achieves this objective. The current setup of Membership Council is unwieldy, but there's no evidence that advisory member seats are the root cause of the

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issue, and they provide important representation and voice for community concerns. [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "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." [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "There should continue to be a concerted community effort to focus on building strategies and action items to increase diversity at the CoC level. Developing and formalizing policies to inclusively and actively engage BIPOC and people with lived expertise of homelessness is proposed as one of the topics undertaken in the inaugural Roadmap for the CoC." [*Government*]

Diversity and Lived Expertise

- Need to be very intentional about not "tokenizing" people with lived expertise. Tokenization is exploitation and it keeps happening. Need to take this as a priority and adopt best practices in engaging people with lived expertise. [*Person with lived expertise of homelessness*]

- There should be intentional effort to build relationships, spend time together, make efforts to get to know everyone. Build in a peer mentorship aspect to pair people who are newer to the CoC/governance with people who have more experience to provide a more comfortable space for asking questions and building familiarity with HUD requirements [*Person with lived expertise of homelessness*]

- *There should be a compensated onboarding process for people with lived expertise of homelessness serving on the Membership Council. Everyone needs to go through an onboarding process, but if you're bringing in people who are not actively engaged in service provider organizations, there may need to be more onboarding – how governance structure works, where it came from, what its purpose is. It can be confusing even as someone that has been involved. [*Person with lived expertise of homelessness*]

- Support recommendation "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. Actively engaging in outreach to and recruitment of historically underrepresented groups should be a priority in the Membership Council member selection process. A focus on retention of BIPOC and people with lived expertise selected to serve on the Membership Council is also crucial." [*Government*]

Proposed Membership Council Composition

- Need a Section of how slate is approved [*Collaborative Applicant*]
- CoC lead agency should have a seat and a vote. [*Provider*]
- Should be a dedicated "equity" seat occupied by a professional in that field (Equity Office, AJC, etc.) [*Provider*]
- Government:

- o Recommend Homeless Strategy Officer, Travis County Executive, perhaps a 2nd City Staff member, (and no City Council Member) [*Government*]
  - Perhaps PHA is a different category? [*Government*]
  - o Don't recommend having elected officials on MC - they will not come and the City of Austin already indicated that having a council member on the MC is a perceived conflict given they are a main funder [*Government*]
  - o Recommend one representative from COA and one from Travis County or some other entity if you want to look holistic and not city [*Government*] focused. Particularly if the idea is to expand the area the CoC serves, this cannot appear to the be all about the Austin. [*Government*]
  - o Consider designating the Local Mental Health Authority (Integral Care) as a dedicated seat [*Provider*]
- Homeless Response System Providers
  - o Strongly recommend adding more homeless response system provider slots [*Provider*]
- *There needs to be a Membership Council training/onboarding process that includes authentic engagement of people with lived expertise of homelessness. [*Person with lived expertise of homelessness*]

Membership Council Role

- Support Membership Council retaining its current primary responsibilities: operating the CoC, designating and operating an HMIS, and providing high-level oversight of the annual CoC competition. [*Government*]

CoC Roadmap

- Not sure what "Austin homelessness policy" might mean, or who/what is included and obligated to follow it – perhaps defining that is the work of the MC? [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "We recommend that the CoC take on a total of five priority Roadmap topics/goals for the initial year." [*Government*]

- [Roadmapping topics/goals] section needs more detail. I would create Core Functions and Options functions. [*Collaborative Applicant*]

- Recommended priority [for Roadmap topic 1] - Build a governing structure that helps work toward an aligned homeless response system. Developing a purpose/mission for the CoC Governing Board as a coalition and coordinating body of stakeholders, outlining clear roles and responsibilities of CoC entities and stakeholders. Taking into account how coordination and collaboration will happen with other decision making groups that operate outside of COC Board and governance structure. [*Collaborative Applicant*]

- [Re Roadmap Topic 3:] Based on the paragraph above "address the needs of the CoC within the updated governance structure before considering broadening its scope" - should this be a priority within the first year or focus in the second year? [*Collaborative Applicant*]

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- [Re Roadmap Topic 4:] Change language to "Creating the CoC Roadmap based on selecting priorities areas using the updated Austin Action Plan to End Homelessness" [*Collaborative Applicant*]

Delegation of Authority and Work Plans

- Support recommendation "The Membership Council should work closely with the committees to develop annual work plans defining tasks for the committees (and underlying workgroups) for the year in a manner consistent with the broader objectives of the Roadmap." [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "Having quarterly reviews of the committee work plans will provide the necessary oversight without overly burdening the Membership Council with details." [*Government*]

Membership Council Leadership

- Membership Council should not limit succession planning to current members of the Membership Council. This process should be discussed in more depth. [*Government*]

Membership Council Meetings

- Support recommendation: "The Membership Council should hold monthly meetings to ensure that it meets its responsibilities. Special meetings occurring outside of the regular monthly meetings should only be called in emergency situations (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic)." [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "The Membership Council should move away from consensus model for decision making and toward a majority-rule voting model, by which all decisions are made by a vote of all present voting members." [*Government*]

Conflict of Interest

- Don't believe that ["Historically, the Austin/Travis County CoC has broadly interpreted these conflict requirements and prohibited service providers from participating in many decisions that may impact them, whether or not they are directly related to funding"] is true. Up until last year, no one was prohibited from any discussions. This past year, CoC Grant Applicants were not allowed in the discussions for CoC Grant award recommendations, after the Independent Review Team scored and ranked the applications. [*Government*]

- Recommendation that "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. The concern should be discussed at openly at Membership Council or Committees and voted on by all non-conflicted members" needs more discussion. [*Government*]

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ECHO

- What does "managing the CoC" mean? [*Government*]
- It would be helpful to see examples of an MOU and the types of decisions this recommendation is suggesting should be delegated to ECHO [Government]
- MOU should match the Governance Charter [*Collaborative Applicant*]
- MOU will outline areas where there may be a perceived Conflict of Interest and which responsibilities have been reviewed and decided as not a presenting a real COI due to role and responsibilities assigned in Governance Charter and in agreed in signed MOU. [*Collaborative Applicant*]
- Oppose recommendation "ECHO should be formally empowered to act as a strong coordinating body for the CoC. This can include not only providing administrative support, but also conducting day-to-day management and implementation of much of the work identified in the CoC's Roadmap." [*Government*]
  o The lead agency's role should be decided by Membership Council. [*Government*]
- The CoC should create an MOU detailing the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency. The MOU should be concerned with lead agency responsibilities in general vs. simply codifying ECHO's current activities within the governance charter. In other words, the MOU should take a clean-slate approach to lead agency roles and responsibilities. [*Government*]
- Membership Council should draft a general MOU concerning lead agency roles and responsibilities, notwithstanding ECHO's current position, roles, etc. [*Government*]

CoC Committees and Workgroups

- Support recommendation "We recommend that the CoC preserve much of this existing structure but make concerted efforts to be more intentional about the composition of and delegation to the committees and workgroups. All work being done at the committee and workgroup level will be guided by the Membership Council's annual Roadmap and corresponding committee work plans." [*Government*]
- Support recommendation "Using the collective expertise of their members, 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. Committees should employ a majority-rule voting model of decision making when acting on those issues on which they have specifically been delegated authority." [*Government*]

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- Include onboarding and intentional conversations about authentic engagement of people with lived expertise of homelessness at all levels, including committees and workgroups. [*Person with lived expertise of homelessness*]

Committees

- Examples of types of decisions committees will be empowered to make on behalf of the CoC would be helpful [*Government*]

- Should the reorder of committees and workgroups begin when the Roadmap is developed? Does the Governing Board (MC) examine and reorder the committees and workgroups? The Governance Restructure Workgroup? Or this group is a workgroup that will draft and propose a new structure using the CoC Governance Recommendations information and present for approval to Membership Council and the group will sunset once implemented? [*Collaborative Applicant*]

- Support recommendation "The CoC would benefit from the addition of a Performance and Monitoring Committee. This committee would be charged with overseeing the CoC Program competition, including local scoring policy. In addition, the CoC should consider creating a Coordinated Entry (CE) Committee to make data-informed decisions related to CE and evaluate, monitor and strategically adjust CE policies and operations." [*Government*]

Workgroups

- Support recommendation "The CoC should work to streamline the number of workgroups wherever possible." [*Government*]

- Support recommendation "The CoC should convene the current co-chairs of the CoC/ESG and Policy and Practice Committee and any potential chairs for the proposed Performance and Monitoring Committee and (potential) CE Committee. This group should work to examine and reorder the committees and workgroups and their related responsibilities given the proposed changes to the overall structure." [*Government*]

Timeline and Proposed Next Steps

Immediate Next Steps:

[No comments]

Next Steps for Restructuring:

- Will the ad hoc workgroup consist of new Membership Council board members based on the slate? This team will be the initiation team? If so, what type of additional support or expertise will this group need in order to be successful in supporting the transition? [*Collaborative Applicant*]