

Vision

Everyone in our community has housing of their choice that provides a foundation for optimal health, success, and stability.



Mission

We lead and align a coalition to administer an effective Homelessness Response System (HRS)—centered in racial equity, informed by the needs and expertise of people experiencing homelessness, and accountable to systemically marginalized communities.

Acknowledgement



Historic, structural, and systemic racism in our community has resulted in people of color, especially Black people, being more likely to become homeless in our community. ECHO is therefore committed to centering racial equity in its work with providers, community partners, and community members.

Values

- **Leadership** – Advocate alongside the people we serve.
- **Passion** – Serve our community with drive and commitment.
- **Racial Equity** – Promote policies, programs, and performance monitoring to reduce racial disparities in homelessness and advance reconciliation efforts.
- **Diversity and Collaboration** – Seek diverse voices and unique perspectives to best serve our community.
- **Continuous Improvement**
 - **Lived Expertise** – Affirm that people are experts in their own circumstances and couple their expertise with data to inform our system.
 - **Data Informed Decisions** – Promote and value evidence and data to impact solutions.
 - **Innovation** – Foster and lead innovation in the HRS.
- **Courage** – Have hard conversations, take personal and organizational accountability, and take risks and make changes when needed.



ECHO has a clearly defined role in the HRS that builds trust and clarity, both internally and externally.

- 1.1 ECHO works with the community and Leadership Council (the HRS governing body) to comprehensively support all core interventions—including Street Outreach, Diversion/Rapid Exit, Emergency Shelter, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR)—through training and support so that service providers have strong and robust programs.
- 1.2 ECHO works to leverage our staff's diverse expertise to advocate collaboratively with people experiencing homelessness, Leadership Council, and the ECHO board, for evidence-based policy solutions at the local, state, and federal levels. ECHO builds a reputation of collaborative advocacy with people experiencing homelessness.
- 1.3 ECHO works collaboratively with Leadership Council to ensure that HRS and community priorities are prioritized by governance and to maintain an equitable governance structure.
- 1.4 ECHO seeks out flexible funding from philanthropy to fill HRS gaps and build capacity in Black- and brown-led organizations.
- 1.5 ECHO advocates for units for the HRS by engaging with stakeholders and the community.

ECHO actively advances racial equity in its organization through equitable and fair distribution of pay, benefits to support good quality of life, and the implementation of clear Human Resources policies and procedures.

- 2.1 ECHO creates, revises, and maintains hiring policies and procedures to align with the organization's commitment to racial equity.
- 2.2 ECHO ensures a proactive and equity-focused approach to formalizing procedures to support staff work/life balance and role clarity.
- 2.3 ECHO implements systematic approaches to review and address the inequalities in existing policies and procedures, while also striving to create new equitable and transparent policies in the future.

ECHO informs the community, providers, policymakers, and funders of the state of the HRS in Austin/Travis County and promotes data-informed system improvement to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

- 3.1 ECHO routinely leads the HRS in using data to improve system outcomes through a conscious understanding of people, programs, and the HRS in general.
- 3.2 ECHO improves HRS reporting capacity by reviewing existing policies, developing new procedures, and expanding the HRS information infrastructure.
- 3.3 ECHO promotes and fosters data maturity through an expansion in data literacy and skills education.

ECHO creates and nurtures authentic engagement with people experiencing homelessness (PEH), people with lived experience (PLE), and our partners in the HRS to improve system-level outcomes.

- 4.1 ECHO has a well-defined, collaborative, and supportive structure for how it engages with PEH and PLE to guide its work.
- 4.2 ECHO has a transparent, equitable, and coordinated process for recruitment, retention, and compensation of people with lived experience (PLE) to inform ECHO's work.
- 4.3 Through collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders and providers, ECHO catalyzes innovative policies and programs to benefit people experiencing varying stages of homelessness who are impacted by systems that interact with the HRS.
- 4.4 ECHO serves as a trusted convener and catalyst for community coordination and alignment among HRS service providers, advocates, funders, and other stakeholders.

A workgroup of ECHO staff, Board members, and the co-chairs of our Homelessness Response System Leadership Council engaged the firm Racial Equity Partners (REP) in 2022 to facilitate a long-term strategic planning process. REP analyzed ECHO's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through interviews and focus groups with 43 people in our community, ECHO Board members, and all 33 ECHO staff members employed at the time. **Thank you to everyone who participated in creating a roadmap for the organization to support our HRS over the next several years.**