

Destination: Home

A COORDINATED APPROACH TO HOUSING AND
HOUSELESSNESS IN THE MID-COLUMBIA REGION

Five-Year
Strategic Plan

2022-2027



Contents

Background

Introduction.....	2
Words and Phrases to Know	4
Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative Vision, Mission, and Values.....	8
Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative Equity Statement.....	9
Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative Planning Participants.....	10

Strategic Plan

Goal Area #1: Shelter	12
Goal Area #2: Services.....	14
Goal Area #3: Housing.....	17
Goal Area #4: Advocacy.....	20

Implementation

Next Steps.....	22
-----------------	----

Introduction

Across Oregon and Washington, communities are facing rising rates of housing insecurity and homelessness. For too many families, staying in housing has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible. Housing supply has lagged while demand has grown. Investors have begun buying up more and more single-family homes. Rents have sky-rocketed. As a result, the idea of being just one illness or car repair away from eviction has become all too familiar to our friends, families, and neighbors.

The issue of homelessness has also become more complex than it used to be. Increasing numbers of unhoused individuals are chronically homeless, meaning they have experienced homelessness for at least a year, or multiple times throughout their lives. Additionally, a growing portion of the homeless population has untreated mental illnesses or substance use disorders that make rehousing more difficult without intensive case management and other supports.

Like with any crisis, homelessness hits some communities harder than others. People of color, LGBTQ+ people, and other historically underserved communities are overrepresented in the homeless population. Families experiencing homelessness are typically headed by women, many of whom are young parents with children, and some of whom are fleeing domestic or sexual violence. People who have been incarcerated are more likely to experience homelessness and struggle to access housing stabilization resources than the general public due to their criminal records.

The Mid-Columbia region is unfortunately not immune from these trends. Preventing and ending homelessness in our area requires urgent, thoughtful work—and most importantly, partnership. Although this is a daunting task, our communities are up to the challenge. To date, there have been multiple, localized efforts to collaborate on work to prevent and end homelessness. However, this work has yet to be thoroughly coordinated across the five-county Mid-Columbia region, resulting in fragmentation across communities. That's why the Mid-Columbia Homeless Collaborative was founded.

In early 2022, Mid-Columbia Community Action Council (MCCAC) hired a consulting team, Sarah Kellems and Heidi Venture, to develop and convene a Collaborative of organizations and local governments from Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties working to address homelessness. With supportive leadership from Washington Gorge Action Programs (WAGAP) and generous funding from Providence, the consultants and MCCAC guided members of the Collaborative through a strategic planning process over the next nine months.

The plan included here represents the work members of the Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative will do over the next five years to develop a more strongly connected regional houselessness response system that provides the highest level of service to our most vulnerable community members. It explains how we will leverage and coordinate existing efforts throughout the region, and how we'll partner to enhance sorely needed services that will help our communities prevent and respond to houselessness more effectively.

This document also serves as the official work plan for MCCAC's Office of Housing Stabilization. This office was established in July, 2022 with funding from the Oregon Legislature following the passage of House Bill 4123, which allocated resources to a handful of communities across Oregon, including in Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman Counties, to strengthen their regional houselessness response systems.

As we begin the work of implementing this plan, we need support from the entire, five-county Mid-Columbia community. Growing houselessness is not simply an individual problem with individual solutions. This issue affects the families and children who are unhoused. It impacts our neighborhoods and divides our communities. And it costs our local and statewide economies significant resources that could be saved if we implemented more proactive interventions. At the end of the day, preventing and ending houselessness is our collective responsibility. It requires a unified, systems-level commitment from key community leaders, local governments, housing developers, tribal leaders, social service agencies, landlords, organizations that provide culturally responsive services to underserved populations, private sector partners, and people who have been or are houseless.

Members of the Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative have already demonstrated they are ready to make that commitment by writing this plan, and we look forward to the next phase of our efforts together to implement it. As we work to address one of the most complex challenges of our time, we invite you to join us so we can make the Mid-Columbia region the most vibrant community possible for everyone who calls this place home.

Onward,

Kelli Horvath
Director of the Office of Housing Stabilization
Mid-Columbia Community Action Council

September, 2022

Words and Phrases to Know

In an effort to make our strategic plan as accessible as possible to all audiences, Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative planning participants requested the inclusion of the following definitions:

Affordable and Accessible Housing

Affordable and accessible housing includes features that make it usable for people with disabilities or limited mobility and allows residents to spend no more than 30% of their income to live there. In this strategic plan, we also define “affordable” housing to mean housing that is reserved for households making 80% or less of the Area Median Income.

Area Median Income (AMI)

The household income for the “middle” household in a geographic region. Half of the families in a region earn more than the AMI, and half earn less. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development calculates and defines the AMI for specific geographic areas across the country every year. Housing providers then use this number as a reference point when setting local income and affordability requirements for available housing units.

Acquisition and Rehabilitation/Rehab

The process of gaining ownership and management rights over a real estate property and renovating existing units rather than developing new units. Acquisition and rehab are valuable tools used by proponents of affordable housing and preservation.

BIPOC

An acronym that stands for “Black, Indigenous, and people of color.” This is a term used to describe communities of color, while centering the experience of Black and Indigenous people, who experience disproportionately high institutional barriers.

Chronically Houseless

Experiencing houselessness for at least a year, or repeatedly over time, while struggling with a disabling condition like a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

Construction Excise Taxes

A charge placed on new construction (except for affordable and accessible housing projects) or additions to existing structures, the revenue from which can be used to fund incentives for building affordable housing and other housing-related programs.

Coordinated Entry

A process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access to resources and are quickly assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and other assistance based on their vulnerabilities and strengths.

Culturally Responsive/Culturally Specific Services

Being able to understand and consider the different cultural backgrounds of clients, and respecting clients' customs, experiences, perspectives, and language when assisting them to access resources.

Equity/Equitable

While an equal approach means giving everyone the same resources, an equitable approach acknowledges that each person has different circumstances, needs, and institutional barriers they have faced. Equity means allocating resources and opportunities in a way that creates equal outcomes.

General Obligation Bonds

Municipal bonds (debt obligations issued by government entities) that provide a way for state and local governments to raise money for public projects that may not yield revenue. General obligation bonds are backed by the state or local government's ability to use taxes to pay bondholders.

Houseless/Houselessness

Lacking a place to live. Many housing and social service providers have begun using this term instead of "homeless," because many people who are or have been unhoused prefer it. This is because "home" is more than a building where a person lives; it represents community, social connections, memories, friends, family, or more. People who lack a physical house often still identify strongly with a place they call home.

Housing Stabilization

The process of connecting to a wide range of individualized services—not just those that are directly related to housing—that help facilitate a person's ability to find and/or stay in housing.

Impact Fees

Fees charged to property developers by local governments for the new infrastructure that must be built to accommodate new development.

Jail Diversion

Community-based services that are designed to keep individuals, especially those with behavioral health issues, from becoming incarcerated by connecting them to other community-based resources like mental health support, substance abuse services,

employment services, and housing. Jail diversion aims to minimize the contact individuals have with law enforcement and help them avoid or reduce jail time.

LGBTQ+

An abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Lived Experience (With Houselessness)

Personal knowledge about houselessness that has been gained because of going through houselessness first-hand rather than through representations constructed by others.

Medical Respite

Medical respite care is short-term residential care for people experiencing houselessness who are too ill or frail to recover from an illness or injury on the streets, but not ill enough to be in a hospital. Medical respite care helps people rest and recover in a safe environment while accessing medical care and other supportive services.

Point in Time Count

Also known as the PIT Count, this is the annual count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing houselessness across the U.S. during the last ten days of January.

Preservation

The process of retaining existing affordable housing, whether at subsidized or fair market costs, and protecting its affordability for current and future tenants.

Rapid Re-Housing

A type of housing assistance that quickly helps people experiencing houselessness to get into housing with the help of application fees, security deposit funding, time-limited rent assistance, incentives to encourage landlords to place clients in their units, and case management services.

Reintegration After Incarceration

The process a person goes through to re-enter society and become a productive member of the community after serving time in jail or prison.

Services/Supportive Services

Aid that makes it easier for someone to get into and stay in housing long-term by enhancing their overall way of living. Examples include help directly related to housing—such as rent assistance—or other resources, such as reliable transportation, affordable childcare, food assistance, training in budgeting and money management, health care, job training, mental health services, or substance abuse treatment.

Supportive Housing

The combination of ongoing affordable housing assistance, such as rent subsidies, with flexible and supportive services for people experiencing houselessness. The goal of supportive housing is to help people stay housed and live a more productive life in the community. There are multiple models of supportive housing: it could include the construction or renovation of new housing, setting aside units in privately-owned buildings, or leasing individual apartments throughout a specific geographic area where clients can receive services from supportive case managers.

System Development Charges

Fees charged on new development, and in some cases on redevelopment. Revenue raised by these fees can help fund new infrastructure or upgrades to existing infrastructure.

Traditional Health Workers

Frontline public health workers who work in health care clinic or community to assist individuals to achieve positive, health-related outcomes. Examples of traditional health workers include community health workers, personal health navigators, peer support specialists, and peer wellness specialists. Traditional health workers may have a particular specialty area or background, such as being a peer support specialist who uses their personal experience recovering from addiction to help a client struggling with a substance use disorder. Or they may promote health on a more holistic level by helping clients navigate multiple supportive services, including those that are not related to health care but contribute to overall well-being and stability.

Urban Renewal

A set of plans and activities, often attached to public financing mechanisms, to upgrade neighborhoods that are in a state of disrepair or decay.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

The Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative envisions a region with equitable opportunities and support, where everyone who needs stable housing can find and afford it—especially communities who have faced disproportionate barriers to housing—so everyone can achieve the best quality of life possible.

Mission

Through collaboration and advocacy, we work to reduce houselessness in the Gorge by expanding housing capacity and ensuring supportive services are provided in culturally affirming ways that uphold human dignity.

Values

Compassion and humanity are at the core of our work. As a collaborative, we recognize the hardships that houseless community members experience and the common humanity we all share, regardless of our housing status.

We value collaboration and partnership; working together helps us provide greater support to houseless and unstably housed community members.

Advocacy allows us to do more to support the vulnerable populations we serve when we champion strategic investments, projects, and policy changes.

We elevate diversity, equity, and lived experience. We cannot do this work without acknowledging the disproportionate barriers the housing crisis has created for communities of color and other traditionally marginalized populations. We cannot effectively advocate for solutions without lifting up the voices of those who are or have been houseless.

We value tenacity and perseverance. Houselessness is a complex issue that cannot be solved overnight; we acknowledge that this work requires visionary leadership and resilience.

Equity Statement

Owning our History

The Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative is aware that housing inequities are rooted in our country's history. When colonizers displaced the first people of these lands, a base of racial and other inequities was built for future generations who call this place home.

Our Collaborative recognizes not every person is born with the same opportunities to succeed, and because we care about people and our human rights, we must adjust our work to help solve these disparities. Further, we know each of us holds onto beliefs about people that are biased, flawed, and need to be challenged in a healthy and just way.

Committing to Equity

We know our differences in race, ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, language, skin color, disability, family or marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, physical or mental ability, traumas, politics, religion, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other identities make each of us unique and valuable members of our community.

We believe basic human rights include equitable access to safe and easy to afford housing, and other tools that help people get into and stay in housing: health care, education, living wage jobs, social services, and more. We also believe inclusion is key to helping all people in our community to feel valued and have a sense they belong.

As a Collaborative, we commit to equity by working with partners in our region to engage fully in efforts to end poverty and houselessness. To achieve equity in our housing work, we will:

- Find and address root cause(s) of inequity, in our work and our own lives
- Improve housing systems where personal identities predict inequitable outcomes
- Use data to drive decisions and focus resources so equity is not just a concept, but a practice
- Include the voices of people who are or have been houseless, with a focus on communities of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC)

Collaborative Planning Participants

- City of Bingen
- City of Goldendale
- City of Hood River and Hood River Homeless Stakeholders Coalition
- City of Stevenson
- City of The Dalles and The Dalles Unhoused Taskforce
- City of White Salmon
- Columbia Gorge Education Service District
- Columbia Gorge Health Council/Bridges to Health Pathways Program
- Father's House
- GEM Immigrant Relief Fund
- Gorge Native American Collaborative
- Guided Path Shelter
- HAVEN from Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Helping Hands Against Violence
- Hood River County
- Hood River County Library District
- Hood River Shelter Services
- Klickitat County Homeless Housing Council
- Mid-Columbia Community Action Council
- Mid-Columbia Center for Living
- Mid-Columbia/Columbia Gorge Housing Authority
- Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- Mid-Columbia Medical Center
- Nch'i Wana Housing
- One Community Health
- Oregon Human Development Corporation
- PacificSource/Columbia Gorge Coordination Care Organization
- Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital
- Sherman County
- Sherman County Sheriff's Office
- Skamania County Homeless Housing Council
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church (The Dalles)
- The Next Door, Inc.
- Wasco County
- Wasco County Sheriff's Office
- Washington Gorge Action Programs
- White Salmon Valley Community Library
- White Salmon Valley School District
- Youth Empowerment Shelter

The Collaborative also includes volunteers and people who are or have been houseless.

Strategic Plan



Goal Area #1: Shelter

Goal Area #2: Services

Goal Area #3: Housing

Goal Area #4: Advocacy

Goal Area #1: Shelter

Objective: Stabilize the region’s shelter system and improve coordination between shelters and service providers

Strategic Priorities

1: Unite agencies in the 5-county Mid-Columbia region to better coordinate shelter placement and supportive services

Strategy: Shelter and re-house people more quickly by creating a shared system for tracking shelter openings and aligning referral and intake processes

Actions:

- ❑ Convene subcommittee of shelter staff and service providers by October 15th, 2022, to review existing coordinated entry procedures, develop a common intake process and improved tracking of shelter openings, and explore options for shared referral and case management platforms
- ❑ By March 31st, 2023, choose and begin implementing improved system to track shelter openings and coordinate intake, referrals, and case management
- ❑ By June 30th, 2023, research shelter and houseless services hotlines in other rural areas and write report to outline resources that would be needed for our region to create one

2: Prioritize stable shelter funding, rapid re-housing funding, and staff support

Strategy: Stabilize shelter system and rapid re-housing program funding

Actions:

- ❑ Partner with domestic violence survivor advocacy organizations, other shelter service providers, and local elected officials in the region to apply and advocate for shelter and rapid re-housing funding
- ❑ By November 1st, 2022, hire a staff member based in MCCAC’s Office of Housing Stabilization to lead fundraising efforts for the Collaborative’s shelter, rapid-re-housing, and other priorities
- ❑ Pursue Project Turnkey funds in Oregon in 2022 to increase the number of shelter and transitional housing units in the Mid-Columbia region; pursue similar funding opportunities in Washington at the local and state levels when possible

Strategy: Enhance training and support for shelter staff and caseworkers

Actions:

- By December 31, 2022, convene subcommittee and conduct survey to address supports needed for shelter staff and caseworkers
- Each January, publish report on the region's shelter and housing casework staff compensation and benefits; include suggestions on how to improve staff support
- At least once a year, host trauma-informed convenings for shelter and casework staff to attend trainings and share best practices

Goal Area #2: Services

Objective: Ensure the region’s supportive services meet client needs in a culturally responsive way

Strategic Priorities

1: Increase accessibility of services with a focus on needs identified by clients

Strategy: Provide culturally responsive and bilingual services

Actions:

- Regularly work with The Next Door, Inc. and use online readability tools to screen regional housing assistance forms for accessible, plain language
- Hire local interpreters to translate housing assistance and other services enrollment documents into English and Spanish, and pair houseless clients with caseworkers who speak their native language whenever possible
- Support Collaborative partner organizations to use tools such as bilingual pay differentials to diversify shelter and casework staff
- At least once per year, provide trainings about culturally responsive care to help service providers better serve the region’s diverse houseless population
- By January 1st of each year, coordinate to create annual, Collaborative-wide fundraising strategy to support and expand culturally responsive services that promote housing stabilization

Strategy: Elevate the voices of people with lived experience and use client feedback to improve services

Actions:

- By October 1, 2022, establish a workgroup of people with lived experience with houselessness to advise on the Collaborative’s work and share feedback on services
- By December 31, 2022, support lived experience workgroup to publish a conversation template that caseworkers and shelter staff can use to create more client-led housing stabilization plans
- By December 31, 2022, publish a toolkit to help Collaborative partner organizations collect feedback from houseless clients about improving services
- Coordinate with lived experience workgroup to organize annual opportunities for community leaders, service providers, and law enforcement officers to experience a day in the life of a houseless person

- ❑ Support Collaborative partner organizations to identify people with lived experience with houselessness to serve on hiring panels for shelter and casework staff
- ❑ Secure funding to provide stipends for lived experience workgroup members
- ❑ Encourage policymakers to provide opportunities for houseless individuals and frontline caseworkers to give policy input

2: Address gaps in services for houseless clients

Strategy: Improve access to existing services in the region that promote housing stabilization

Actions:

- ❑ By December 31, 2022, create and distribute a bilingual (English and Spanish) flowchart or other user-friendly document to depict key services in the region and how to access them
- ❑ Update supportive services document at least annually and re-distribute to regional partner organizations for use by caseworkers and clients
- ❑ Coordinate at least two informational sessions about rapid re-housing program offerings in the region to area social service agencies, property management companies, and independent landlords by March 31st, 2023
- ❑ Explore ways to enhance transportation options for houseless clients who need caseworkers to accompany them to enroll in services
- ❑ Find flexible resources to pay for gift cards and other incentives to help build trust and help houseless clients feel more comfortable accessing services

Strategy: Secure resources for services that need to be created or enhanced to improve support for the region's houseless community

Actions:

- ❑ Regularly seek funding to sustain and improve services houseless people reliably connect to like shelter, street outreach services, emergency medical care, and law enforcement
- ❑ Advocate to improve and expand services houseless people struggle to connect to reliably, such as supportive housing, medical respite care, jail diversion and reintegration after incarceration, and wraparound case management
- ❑ Involve Collaborative members in regional plans focused on expanding behavioral health and substance use disorder support services
- ❑ Support behavioral health providers to advocate for the resources needed to expand the region's behavioral health programs, especially crisis response services

- ❑ Support Providence Hood River to ensure strong coordination of services during and after their launch of the [Better Outcomes thru Bridges Program](#) in the Mid-Columbia region
- ❑ Pursue funding to increase the number of Traditional Health Workers—especially Peer Support Specialists—in our region who can provide housing, behavioral health, and other navigation services to houseless clients
- ❑ Develop plan and resources to provide more educational opportunities for houseless clients, such as renter education classes and know your rights trainings focused on interactions with law enforcement
- ❑ Invest in making resources such as those offered by the [PCC CLEAR Clinic](#) more accessible to houseless clients in our region to help them clear criminal and eviction records

3: Strengthen communication between service providers

Strategy: Decrease barriers to services by enhancing coordination of client intake processes, referrals, and case management

Actions:

- ❑ Include service providers in the subcommittee that will assess technology platforms before choosing and implementing a shared intake, referral, and case management system for houseless clients by March 31st, 2023
- ❑ Support subcommittee to propose and test case conferencing models to improve coordination of care, especially for chronically houseless clients and those with significant behavioral health or substance abuse needs

Goal Area #3: Housing

Objective: Preserve and expand affordable, accessible housing

Strategic Priorities

1: Increase the supply of housing units that low-income households (80% Area Median Income or below) can afford

Strategy: Advocate to increase funding and lower costs for affordable and accessible housing development

Actions:

- By December 31st, 2022, convene subcommittee to conduct research on the best ways to enhance funding for affordable housing in the region, especially in rural and unincorporated areas
- By March 31st, 2023, publish report about subcommittee's research and recommendations
- Advocate with relevant local governments to waive system development charges and impact fees
- Advocate with relevant local governments to establish and use construction excise taxes
- Engage Collaborative members in urban renewal funding discussions and encourage use of urban renewal funds to build affordable, accessible housing
- Work with service providers and local elected officials to secure adequate supportive services and rent assistance to align with funding used to construct affordable housing

Strategy: Take public actions to support Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation, tribal housing authorities, local governments, and other partners to build at least 262 affordable, accessible housing units in the region by 2027

Actions:

- Support completion of the [Rand Road project](#) in Hood River (129 units total, 39 of which will be for households at or below 30% AMI and 90 of which will be for households at or below 60% AMI)
- Help complete the Westgate Market project in The Dalles (75 units total, all of which will be for households at or below 80% AMI and a portion of which will be reserved specifically for low-income veterans)

- ❑ Support completion of the White Salmon Assisted Living Facility project (52 units total with 13 at or below 50% AMI and the rest at or below 120% AMI with a potential for some below 80% AMI pending future funding)
- ❑ Support completion of the Wishram Project (45 units total, all of which will be for households at or below 50% AMI and 23 of which will be reserved for houseless applicants)
- ❑ Explore and foster private land donations for affordable, accessible housing development

2: Use preservation, acquisition, and rehabilitation to protect the region’s existing supply of affordable, accessible housing

Strategy: Advocate for relevant funding, policies, and projects

Actions:

- ❑ Support completion of the Rhine Village acquisition and rehab project in White Salmon (36 units total, 35 units for households at or below 60% AMI)
- ❑ Support completion of the Columbia View acquisition and rehab project in Cascade Locks (12 units total, all of which will be for households at or below 60% AMI)
- ❑ By June 30th, 2023, work with the Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation to write regional report on affordable, accessible housing preservation opportunities; include advice about new acquisition and rehabilitation projects to pursue
- ❑ In coordination with local elected officials, governments, and agencies, apply for funding to support eligible projects
- ❑ Work with local governments to pass policies that promote affordable and accessible housing preservation, such as preserving mobile home parks and closing loopholes on short-term apartment rentals
- ❑ Find and work with local supportive governments and organizations to advocate for the Community Development Block Grant program and housing rehabilitation loan programs

3: Prioritize access to affordable, accessible housing units for communities of color and other traditionally underserved populations

Strategy: Partner with organizations who serve culturally specific populations to ensure equitable access to affordable housing

Actions:

- ❑ By March 31st, 2023, convene subcommittee to identify strategies to make access to affordable housing more equitable, such as preference policies for applicants referred by providers serving culturally specific populations

- ❑ Seek additional funding for tools to enhance the ability of organizations who provide culturally specific services to place client in vacant housing units, such as housing placement service fees
- ❑ Ensure robust marketing to traditionally underserved communities when units are made available, including through creation and use of a language access plan

4: Educate elected officials, community leaders, and the public about why our region needs more affordable and accessible housing

Strategy: Collect and share data and personal stories to educate people about houselessness and highlight the need for more housing

Actions:

- ❑ Support MCCAC and WAGAP to expand the annual Point in Time Count, including by involving providers who provide culturally specific services to underserved populations, and those who support clients with behavioral health needs
- ❑ By November 30th, 2022, publish local report with personal stories from people in our area who have been houseless and data on regional housing needs from the Corporation for Supportive Housing, Oregon Affordable Housing Inventory, recent regional studies on land and affordable housing inventory, and the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s “Out of Reach” report
- ❑ By January 1st, 2023, have meetings with local and state elected officials in our region to share the report, highlight its impact on our communities, and ask them to support the Collaborative’s housing goals during the 2023 legislative session and beyond

Goal Area #4: Advocacy

Objective #4: Advocate, engage the community, and build support for the region’s efforts to address houselessness

Strategic Priorities

1: Communicate to build awareness and support

Strategy: Develop and implement a strategic communications plan

Actions:

- By November 1st, 2022, hire at least a half-time staff member based in MCCAC’s Office of Housing Stabilization to implement a strategic communications plan and coordinate the Collaborative’s community relations work
- Regularly collect and publicly share real stories of people who have experienced houselessness or struggled to access services

2: Use accurate data to inform people of the realities of houselessness and to address opposition to the Collaborative’s priorities

Strategy: Collect and share data about regional houselessness and housing

Actions:

- Secure stable, long-term funding to pay at least one staff member to support the Collaborative’s data collection and reporting needs
- Coordinate with local hospitals, law enforcement, employers, and organizations who provide culturally specific services to collect and share data about the impact of houselessness—and of houselessness prevention and response services—on the community
- Publish annual press release in English and Spanish to highlight regional houselessness statistics, emphasize success stories, dispel myths about affordable housing and houselessness, and share progress on the Collaborative’s equity commitments

3: Advocate for funding and policies that support the Collaborative’s strategic investments

Strategy: Participate in statewide, regional, and local task forces focused on houselessness

Actions:

- Advocate to secure appointments on task forces for members of the Collaborative
- Provide opportunities at monthly Collaborative meetings for task force members to report on their work and ensure institutional memory is not lost when their time on task forces ends and new members are appointed
- Leverage policy tools and resources for the region

Strategy: Pursue public funding at the federal, state, and local level

Actions:

- Work closely with local elected officials and governments to identify additional government funding opportunities to support the Collaborative’s long-term priorities
- Every year, coordinate a delegation of local leaders to meet with their representatives and advocate for funding at the state and federal level
- By January of 2023, develop and begin training an advocacy team made up of people who are or have experienced homelessness to publicly share their stories and lobby decision-makers
- Meet at least quarterly with state or federal agency staff to nurture relationships and strengthen applications for grants they administer

Strategy: Seek foundation and other private funding opportunities

Actions:

- By December 31st, 2022, create a region-wide grant pipeline and direct the Collaborative’s fundraising staff to coordinate its implementation
- Include strategy for cultivating foundation relationships in grant pipeline and regularly engage Collaborative members in meetings with potential funders

Strategy: Build a committed base of donors to support the Collaborative’s objectives

Actions:

- Direct the Collaborative’s fundraising staff to develop and begin implementing a major donor strategy by March 31st, 2023
- By June 30th, 2023, launch a small donor fundraising program to enhance flexible resources for the Collaborative’s work and build community support for the region’s homelessness response and prevention efforts
- By October 31st, 2023, secure enough sponsorships to host the first annual Collaborative fundraising event to raise money for the Collaborative’s priorities, highlight the impact of our work, and publicly thank supporters

Implementation

The completion of this strategic plan represents the first step of the Mid-Columbia Houseless Collaborative’s work together over the next five years. The only way we can accomplish the goals we have outlined is by building on the momentum we have created.

Next Steps:

We will continue to convene regularly to execute detailed work plans in each of our strategic goal areas, evaluate our progress, and make updates to the plan as new challenges and opportunities arise.

In practice, this means:

- ❑ Presenting our plan and providing updates as needed to local government bodies and relevant organizations in the Mid-Columbia region
- ❑ Appointing and convening subcommittees comprised of Collaborative planning participants to begin acting on specific goal areas and strategic priorities
- ❑ Coordinating with Mid-Columbia Community Action Council and Washington Gorge Action Programs to fully staff the Mid-Columbia Office of Housing Stabilization and develop detailed workplans to execute strategic plan initiatives
- ❑ Directing staff to coordinate work on specific goal areas with relevant partner organizations/governments on an individual or small group basis as needed
- ❑ Providing the full group of Collaborative planning participants, including the lived experience workgroup and House Bill 4123 Advisory Board members, with quarterly reports linked to the goals and strategies outlined in the strategic plan
- ❑ Conducting annual listening sessions to get feedback from community leaders and partners about headway made on the Collaborative’s strategic plan and equity commitments
- ❑ Reviewing the strategic plan annually with the full group of Collaborative planning participants to evaluate progress, update established metrics if needed, and revise the plan to ensure it continues to be responsive to the community’s needs