

Yakima County Homeless Coalition
MEETING MINUTES
September 17, 2019

CALL TO ORDER The September 17, 2019 came to order at 1:36 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS Members present: Kellie Connaughton (YHC Chair, Yakima Greenway), Josh Jackson (YHC Vice-Chair, Rod's House), Esther Magasis (Yakima County Homeless Program), Kelly Penfold (Alpha Team), Mike Leita (Yakima County BOCC), Jerry Mellen (Dedicated Realty), Joe Brusica (Yakima County Prosecutors Office), David Hanson (Sunrise Outreach), Mike Kay (Sunrise Outreach), Sheri Rynd (Sunrise Outreach), Joan Davenport (City of Yakima), Jeanna Hernandez, Carlos Reyes (Yakima County Housing Authority), Deb Sterling (Entrust Community Services), Juan Benavides (Blue Mountain Action Council), Jackie Hertel (League of Women Voters), Geoff Baker (Homeless Network of Yakima County), Jeanne Olney (Catholic Charities), Lee Murdock (Homeless Network of Yakima County), Mary Stephenson (League of Women Voters, NAMI Yakima), Scott Thielen (Union Gospel Mission), Jamie Shores (United Way), Meredith Bruch (Northwest Justice Project, Joan Souders (Grandview, YVCOG)

OLD BUSINESS Approval of Minutes: July 16, 2019 YHC Meeting
Approval of minutes **Action: Kelly Penfold moved to approve the minutes from the July 16, 2019 YHC Meeting. It was seconded. The motion carried.**

PIT Count Josh Jackson updated the Coalition members on the goals and outcomes of the August opt-in PIT conversation.

- The decision was made at that meeting to conduct the 2020 PIT Count locally. There is a max budget of \$36,600 (the amount that had been allocated to the third-party contractor in the previous year).
- There will be a YHC Pit Count/Data Needs Subcommittee formed to assist in coordinated the organization. The first meeting will be in October – interested parties should contact Esther Magasis (esther.magasis@co.yakima.wa.us).

Esther stated that the YHC has collaborated with the Yakima County Homeless Network to ensure that there is no duplication of data collection and analysis efforts between the two groups.

- The Homeless Network will continue to provide a Housing Assessment Profile for Yakima County (focus on housing stock), while the Coalition will be responsible for conducting the PIT Count (focus on consumers). These efforts will be brought together to inform the development of future 5-Year Plans.

NEW BUSINESS
5-Year Plan Update The 5-Year Plan was condensed from 11 goals to 5

New goals:

1. Quickly identify and engage people experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination between every system that encounters people experiencing homelessness
2. Operate an effective and efficient homeless crisis response system that swiftly moves people into stable permanent housing
3. Support the development of adequate affordable housing
4. Track and publish data regarding homelessness in Yakima County
5. Address disparities among people experiencing homelessness

Goal 5 Lee Murdock: Goal 5 specifies “disparities,” but there are tasks associated with that goal that are specific to priority groups (i.e. youth, veterans), which are not “disparities” as usually defined by the state (i.e. protected classes).

Esther Magasis: Proposal to change the language of Goal 5 to “Address disparities among people experiencing homelessness and create resources to meet the needs of priority populations.”

Proposal accepted by YHC members present.

Joan Davenport: Task 5.1 is lacking, there is no tangible action associated with it, and it is narrowly focused on racial disparities, which isn't the only disparity that's important to be cognizant of. Would like for there to be action assigned to the task to give it teeth, as well as a broadening of the focus.

Esther Magasis: Agree that it is an underwhelming task as-is, and the suggestion had been made at the last meeting as well that the scope be expanded. However, the advisement that the Executive Committee received from TAC last month was that the goals should be limited to things we are required to achieve, and things we are confident we can deliver on. Not including something in the plan does not preclude us from working on it, but if we include things we cannot deliver on, the legislature may view us a community that is not good at planning, and it could impact whether or not we are viewed favorably for funding in the future. For this reason, the Executive Committee made the decision to restrict the language of that task just to what was required from the state. There is, however, opportunity for discussion on that point, and if any providers or community members are willing to come forward with a commitment to an action that they know they can deliver on related to this task, that would be great for inclusion.

The decision was made to add to the language of task 5.1 without committing outside of the scope of what is possible by broadening 5.2 and consolidating both: “Assess and analyze racial disparities using a racial equity tool and data provided by Commerce and seek additional data sources for assessing other disparities.”

Jerry Mellen: Not sure what the reason is for the emphasis on race. If someone is sleeping outside under a blanket, it shouldn't matter if they're Italian or blue-eyed or balding, what is the value in talking about their race?

Sheri Rynd: Agreement with Jerry's statement.

Esther Magasis: This is a state requirement, so we need to include it in our 5-year plan.

While I do agree that a person's race should not impact the quality of service that individual has access to, we need to understand racial disparities in order to successfully develop systems-level solutions.

Lee Murdock: Note that tasks 5.3 and 5.8 both fall under the purview of the Anchor Community Initiative, not the Homeless Coalition – as such, should they be included in the 5-Year Plan? Isn't the 5-Year Plan intended to be deliverables that the state will hold us to and measure us on? ACI falls outside the purview of what the BOCC is required to account for.

Meredith Bruch: If we know it will be accomplished, shouldn't we go ahead and include it and get credit for the work we're doing as a community, regardless of who's responsible for it?

Consensus from YHC members present that the ACI-related tasks should be kept in, since they are part of the work being done in the community.

Goal 1

Lee Murdock: Task 1.3, “services” should be changed to “housing.”

Goal 2

Esther Magasis: Goals 2.1-2.8 are taken directly from the CHG contract, and as such cannot be changed or removed.

Meredith Bruch: What services are taken into consideration when assessing 2.4 (percent unsheltered served by homeless response system)? Are legal services considered part of the homeless response system? What about other resources, like educational support?

Esther Magasis: Assuming that the services taken into consideration are those tracked in HMIS, but will follow up with Commerce.

Task 2.9 deemed to be too long – can that descriptive language live in the narrative section of the 5-Year Plan, and just be referenced in the task?

2.9 language changed from long list of homeless crisis response system components to “as described in the plan.”

Goal 3

Lee Murdock: In task 3.1, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) cannot also be low-barrier. PSH programs are no low barrier.

Josh Jackson: What about evidence-based?

3.1 language changed from “low-barrier PSH” to “evidence-based PSH.”

Mike Leita: In task 3.2, “willingness” should be removed – don’t want to say that landlords aren’t willing to work with providers or individuals experiencing homelessness.

3.2 language changed from “willingness” to “participation.”

Joan Davenport: Task 3.3 is too specific in the types of interventions supported

3.3 language changed from “initiatives for new construction of low-income units such as accessory or efficiency housing” to “affordable housing strategies to increase density.”

Esther Magasis: Is task 3.4 redundant to 3.1, and 3.5 redundant to 3.2?

3.4 removed, 3.5 merged with 3.2: “Explore partnerships with landlords to increase and support participation in the homeless crisis response system.”

Task added: “Research best practices surrounding the provision of affordable housing for Yakima County”

Goal 4

4.1 “Assuming existing resources and state politics” language removed

Lee Murdock: 4.2 on its own seems unnecessary – using HMIS is a requirement for any program funded by the state. Instead, language could focus on actively recruiting partners in the homeless crisis response system in participating in HMIS. Those who are not required to use HMIS and are not funded for it often can’t participate because of the cost of equipment, training, and staff time needed. Could this task be modified to support offsetting the costs of HMIS? Something for the BOCC to consider when making funding decisions.

4.2 language added for consideration: “by actively recruiting non-funded partners

Concern raised that 4.4 and 4.5 are redundant.

Rebuttal: 4.5 us about monitoring and tracking program performance for stakeholders, the information given to invested stakeholders might be different than what’s accessible to the community and taxpayers at large, who still deserve to be informed of the work.

4.4 language changed to: “increase accessibility and transparency of data.”

In task 4.5, add specificity as to what is being monitored and tracked.

4.5 language added: “...track program performance in the homeless crisis response system...”

Next Steps

Meredith Bruch: How will goals and tasks be prioritized?

Esther Magasis: Goal 2 contains state CHG contract deliverables, so that must be accomplished. Outside of that, maybe it is up to BOCC discretion? This is a great topic to discuss at the next YHC General Membership meeting, when we are reviewing the final draft that will be reviewed by the Commissioners for approval and submission to Commerce.

Action: Synthesize the suggested edits from this meeting into a new draft for the Exec Committee to review. (Esther)

Action: Follow up with Commerce to clarify what constitutes services in the homeless response system (task 2.4). (Esther)

Action: Discuss prioritization at the next YHC General Membership meeting.

Other Business YHC PIT Count/Data Subcommittee meeting date still TBD – those interested in participation should contact Esther Magasis (esther.magasis@co.yakima.wa.us).

Next Meeting Tuesday, November 19th at 1:30 p.m.
State Fair Room
1301 S Fair Ave, Yakima, WA 98901

The meeting will be an opportunity for community members to see the final draft of this year's 5-Year Plan update.

Adjourn With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

DRAFT