

# CoC Plan for Serving Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Severe Service Needs

## Vision

This plan is the start of the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care's (TX BoS CoC's) dedicated efforts to reduce the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness or with histories of unsheltered homelessness who have severe service needs. The array of answers to the survey questions and broad geographic participation point to the uniqueness of each community and also to the complexity of addressing homelessness both within a community and across the 215-county TX BoS CoC.

The plan is intended to be structured enough to provide consistency and a minimum standard of shelter, housing, and services across the CoC yet flexible enough to allow local areas to tailor interventions that will work for their specific needs. The goal is to provide a framework for the CoC to implement strategies to reduce unsheltered homelessness and to target resources to individuals and families with severe service needs. We invite you to join us!

## Participative Planning Process

Texas Homeless Network (THN), as the lead agency for the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care (TX BoS CoC) drafted this *CoC Plan for Serving Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Severe Service Needs*. In order to facilitate a participative planning process, THN took several steps.

- THN held an informational webinar on 7/13/22 and invited people to give input into the plan by poll responses and chat.
- THN published an online survey that was open from 7/20/22 through 8/10/22.
- THN posted a draft of the plan on THN's website, where people could comment on the plan.
- THN released a feedback form where people could give feedback on the draft plan.
- THN held a public consultation on the draft plan held by webinar on 8/3/22.
- THN held a Community Conversation about the Plan during the CoC General Membership meeting held by webinar on 8/10/22.

All those planning opportunities were publicized on the CoC section of THN's website, on social media, by email to the "competition email list" for the CoC, and by email to various groups of CoC interested parties. Communications on the accessible website were provided in a manner that is effective for persons with hearing, visual, and other communication-related disabilities.

THN conducted a survey to gather CoC general members' input into the CoC Plan. Survey respondents reflect a diverse cross-section of the CoC and resemble the population of people experiencing homelessness in the CoC in several ways.

*Note: Not every survey respondent answered every survey question.*

*Note: THN did not collect demographic data on participants in the 7/13/22 virtual community meeting.*

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Lived Experience</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 30% have lived experience of homelessness</li> <li>● 21% have lived experience of unsheltered homelessness</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Age</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 0% under 18 years;</li> <li>● 1.4% 18-24 years;</li> <li>● 18% 25-34 years;</li> <li>● 25% 35-44 years;</li> <li>● 26% 45-54 years;</li> <li>● 16% 55-64;</li> <li>● 10% over 65 years old</li> </ul> |
| <b>Race</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 72% White;</li> <li>● 27% Black or African American</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 76% non-Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x);</li> <li>● 24% Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Gender</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 74% Women;</li> <li>● 27% Men</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Sexual Orientation</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 91% Heterosexual;</li> <li>● 9% identified as LGBTQIA</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Other characteristics</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 5% are veterans;</li> <li>● 16% are living with a disability;</li> <li>● 19% have been arrested or incarcerated</li> </ul>  |

To make the data more closely reflect the demographics of the population experiencing homelessness in the CoC, as reported in the 2022 Point In Time (PIT) Count, **we need to receive more responses from people who identify as the following:**

1. American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous,
2. Asian or Asian American,
3. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,
4. of Multiple Races,
5. Hispanic/Latin(o)(a)(x), and/or
6. Male

Before this plan is finalized, THN staff will publicize the opportunities to give feedback on the draft plan, emphasizing targeted outreach to people in those groups. **Additionally we want to highlight that we welcome more input from people with lived experience of homelessness or unsheltered homelessness to lend their expertise to this work.**

## CoC's Priorities in the Plan

This plan was written in response to the Supplemental Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), but the priorities represent components of a strategy to address unsheltered homelessness that are broadly

applicable to a community's efforts to address unsheltered homelessness and meet the needs of those with severe service needs. These priorities reflect the most important components of the plan at this time, and are woven throughout the sections of the plan.

For more information, please see the Supplemental NOFO Request for Proposals that is projected to be available on Friday, August 26, 2022. **Applicants to the Supplemental NOFO must align with the priorities below.**

**Regardless of project component, all applicants must clearly describe:**

1. **Community-wide commitment to the project.**
  - a. All applicants will be asked to identify partners in the development of the application, partners in the administration of the project, and partners in the oversight and evaluation of the project.
  - b. These partners should include stakeholder groups such as the Local Homeless Coalition (LHC), the Coordinated Entry Planning Entity (CEPE), persons with lived experience of homelessness, governmental agencies [county government or regional councils of governments (COGs)] and other cross-sector partners.
  - c. As part of a community-wide commitment to the goal of reducing unsheltered homelessness, application partners must not participate in activities that criminalize homelessness.
2. **Landlord recruitment/ engagement strategy (if funded under this NOFO)**
3. **Strategy for leveraging additional resources in the operation of the project, including:**
  - a. Additional housing resources
  - b. Additional healthcare resources
4. **Commitment to employ staff whose primary function is to assist individuals with their SSI/SSDI applications**
  - a. utilizing the SSI/SSDI Outreach Assessment and Referral (SOAR) process.
5. **Commitment to implement Housing First principles and practices.**
6. **Their strategy for targeting people who are unsheltered, or with histories of unsheltered homelessness, and people with severe service needs**
7. **Engagement persons with lived experience of homelessness (PWLE), including how they:**
  - a. meaningfully contributed to the project design;
  - b. will contribute to the development of the project; and
  - c. will participate in the implementation of projects funded under this NOFO
8. **How the project will identify and serve "underserved" communities**
  - a. "underserved" communities are or those that have not previously been served by the homeless system at the same rate that they experience homelessness in the community
    - i. (that is, they are experiencing homelessness in the community, but they are not being served by the homeless services system).

**Applicants for the Rural Set-Aside must:**

9. **Request the maximum 20% of funds requested as part of the project for capacity building activities.**
  - a. Also, if awarded funds, grantees must use 50% or more of those capacity building funds to implement this CoC Plan at the project level.
10. **Demonstrate that Street Outreach projects funded will ensure that emergency lodging is truly short-term emergency lodging and not a substitute for permanent housing.**

**Considerations specifically for Street Outreach:**

11. **Project-level Street Outreach activities must connect participants to immediate access to low-barrier shelter or housing.**
  - a. (Street Outreach that is part of a Housing Project–Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) or Joint Transitional Housing/Rapid Re-Housing (TH/RRH)
12. **Street Outreach projects funded through Supportive Services Only (SSO) must be accountable to the communities**
  - a. Meaning that they have a letter of support from the Local Homeless Coalition (LHC).
13. **Street Outreach projects funded through this initiative must identify, engage, and serve people who are unsheltered and people with severe service needs, and resolve their current housing crisis for both the short term and the long term .**

## **CoC Plan–Major Sections**

### **A. Leveraging Housing Resources**

#### **1. Development of new units and creation of housing opportunities**

- a. One goal of the Supplemental NOFO funds is to increase the number of permanent housing units available to persons experiencing homelessness. In order to do that most effectively, funds requested must be leveraged with housing resources not funded by CoC Program or ESG Program funds and not already dedicated to people experiencing homelessness.
  - i. The CoC Board, acting on behalf of the CoC, may establish partnerships in order to gain permanent housing units across the CoC. **But the primary leveraging of housing resources will be done by Applicants within their respective project applications.** Therefore, the committed leveraged housing resources, the number of new units, dates available, and the number of units that include preferences or set-asides will be known after project applications are received, scored, and ranked.
- b. Community input at the 7/13 webinar and in the survey indicated that Public Housing Authorities’ (PHAs’) programs are the most-often cited housing resource that respondents want the CoC to partner with.
  - i. The top three selections, at 15% of respondents each, were
    1. PHA–public housing,
    2. PHA–Housing Choice Vouchers referred through CE, and
    3. affordable housing developers.
  - ii. Working together to advance collaboration will result in increasing the availability

- of and access to PHA housing by people experiencing homelessness.
- iii. Poll/survey results also show the need to more fully explore and develop the relationship between PHAs and nonprofit organizations or housing crisis response systems (HCRS) to further leverage these powerful resources.
    1. The CoC will model this type of partnership with the State Housing Authority, the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA).
    2. The two entities will collaborate to implement a homeless preference for the State Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program through CE and a prioritization plan for “incremental” or “special purpose” vouchers (Stability Vouchers) referenced in the Supplemental NOFO using the Coordinated Entry (CE) system.
  - c. THN is structuring the leveraging of housing resources within projects as both a threshold criterion and as a scored component of the local competition’s application. Applicants that demonstrate firm written commitments from PHAs where at least 50% of the total units available to the project as part of the commitment may be awarded full points on this scoring criterion.
    - i. Commitments from any other housing resources, such as Home Investment Partnership Program-American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) funds where at least 50% of the total units available to the project as part of the commitment, may be awarded partial points.
    - ii. Applicants that do not reach the 50% goal may receive partial points for this criterion.
  - d. Commitment of units must be documented by a formal agreement such as a letter of commitment or a contract. Applicants will be required to submit a copy of the formal agreement as part of the application in response to the CoC’s RFP. A letter of commitment template will be available in the application materials.

| Project | Housing Resource | # of New Units | Date Available for Program Participants | # of Units that Include Preferences or Set-Asides | For PSH, % of Units in the Project | For RRH, % of Program Participants Anticipated to be Served by the Project |
|---------|------------------|----------------|---|---|------------------------------------|--|
|         |                  |                |   |   |                                    |  |

## 2. Landlord Recruitment

- a. The CoC does not have a strategy for landlord recruitment that covers the entire 215-county geographic area of the CoC. When developing this plan, the CoC sought feedback about the most important way to reduce unsheltered homelessness in the CoC,
  - i. one 7/13 poll respondent said to provide “incentive[s] for landlords to work with

- clients who may have backgrounds or lack credit, financial history.”
- ii. Two survey respondents said, “Landlords/[property managers] PM willing to work with agencies that can provide housing assistance,” and “Need landlords who are willing to allocate specific units for homeless.”
  - iii. Another respondent said organizations in their community “have been coming together for a Housing Navigation workgroup to navigate potential apartment/landlord partners.”
  - iv. All those comments point to the need to work hand-in-hand with landlords to house people experiencing homelessness.
- b. Activity on the CoC level does exist, though. THN, in collaboration with TDHCA, administers the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program in which TDHCA made 380 vouchers available to people in 186 TX BoS CoC counties.
- i. The project began in November 2021, and it marked the first time that THN as the Lead Agency for the TX BoS CoC has administered a direct services program. The EHV-dedicated staff at THN conduct landlord engagement, developed and administer a robust landlord incentive program, and provide housing navigation services to people who participate in the program.
  - ii. All those aspects of the project involve staff working with landlords and property managers on behalf of project participants. That strategy has worked well to house 21 households as of July 27, 2022.
- c. Also, under the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program–CARES Act (ESG-CV-2) funds, THN contracted with Endeavors to provide Coordinated Entry for any counties not covered in the 17 CE regions. The project included efforts to increase the number of landlords and property owners willing to house people experiencing homelessness.
- i. As this project is winding down, the CoC can leverage relationships that have been developed and connect those property owners to other projects serving people experiencing homelessness.
- d. On a community level and on a project level, a number of strategies have been used for landlord recruitment. Within CoC Program-funded projects and ESG Program-funded projects. For example, at least one CoC Program-funded project, Lubbock Open Door in Lubbock, Texas, is hiring a licensed real estate agent to perform landlord engagement, retention and housing location.
- e. The CoC plans to collect data from recipients/subrecipients/grantees [of EHV, ESG, and Emergency Rental Assistance-Housing Stability Services (ERA-HSS) funds] on strategies they have used and what lessons they have learned in order to develop a CoC-wide written standard that BoS communities will be expected to follow.
- i. THN will use the data to reach out to communities that have not used landlord incentives or recruited landlords and advocate for flexible funding or for the targeted use of landlord incentives combined with landlord recruitment.
  - ii. THN is especially interested in comparing data from rural communities that have landlord incentives with urban communities to demonstrate effectiveness. And THN aims to provide training for a CoC-wide strategy for landlord recruitment when money for incentives exists and when it does not.

- f. Some lessons learned include the need to provide landlord incentives, and the need for both pre-lease and post-lease landlord engagement, recruitment and efforts to promote retention. THN plans to use the experience gained from administering the EHV projects in the TX BoS CoC to train other projects in the CoC on landlord engagement.
- g. To update the landlord recruitment strategy, The CoC will use HMIS data from the THN EHV Project that looks at the relative success when landlord incentives are employed versus when they are not, as demonstrated by the rate of lease-up or time from voucher issuance to date leased, compared to other EHV projects in the state.
  - i. The CoC will use a similar process to identify projects in the TX BoS CoC that meet or exceed performance expectations for System Performance Measures, Measure 1, “The Length of Time Persons Remain Homeless” and interview those providers to determine opportunities to scale to the CoC-level.
  - ii. There are other Pandemic Relief Funds that employ landlord incentives as a means of landlord recruitment. The CoC will evaluate the effectiveness of those landlord recruitment strategies and incorporate practices that can be scaled.
- h. Evaluation of the landlord recruitment strategy will be incorporated into the CoC’s strategy to improve performance on System Performance Measures.
- i. In order to make the most of this funding opportunity, applicants for Rural Set-Aside funds must request the maximum allowed—20% of funds requested as part of the project—for capacity building activities.
  - i. Also, if awarded funds, grantees must use 50% or more of those capacity building funds to implement this CoC Plan at the project level.
    - 1. An example of a capacity building activity could be the development of a community-level landlord Recruitment strategy. Other examples are listed in the NOFO on page 21.

## **B. Leveraging Healthcare Resources**

### **1. Improve Health Outcomes and Housing Stability**

- a. Another goal of the Supplemental NOFO funds is to improve health outcomes and housing stability among the target population of people experiencing homelessness who have high vulnerabilities. In order to do that most effectively, funds requested must be leveraged with healthcare resources.
  - i. Anecdotally, helping people experiencing homelessness in rural areas of the CoC to access substance use disorder treatment services and other mental health care have been great needs.
    - In the poll and survey for this plan, in response to the question, “Which of the following healthcare resources should the CoC partner with on strategies and actions to reduce unsheltered homelessness and to address severe service needs? (Select all that apply),” the highest percentage of responses were
      - 1. LMHAs (26%) and
      - 2. substance use disorder treatment services (23%).
    - Poll results and survey results emphasize the need to further explore and develop the relationships between HCRS and LMHA and the ability to connect households to substance use disorder treatment.

- b. The CoC Board, acting on behalf of the CoC, may establish partnerships in order to increase healthcare resources to help persons experiencing homelessness across the CoC. The CoC strategy to connect people experiencing homelessness with substance use disorder treatment lies with the relationship between the CoC and Be Well Texas.
  - i. Be Well Texas is a state-funded program for people seeking help with substance use and/or mental illness. It provides access to high-quality, evidence-based treatment and related services to people regardless of their ability to pay.
  - ii. Staff from Be Well Texas have presented information about their services to the CoC Board and at a CoC General Membership meeting in 2022, inviting members to refer anyone seeking treatment to the program and recruiting providers to participate in its provider network.
  - iii. The primary leveraging of healthcare resources, though, will be done by Applicants within their respective project applications. Therefore, the sources of committed leveraged healthcare resources, value of the commitments, and dates the services will be available will be known after project applications are received, scored, and ranked.
- c. THN is structuring the leveraging of housing resources within projects as a threshold criterion and as a scored component of the local competition's application.
  - i. Community input at the 7/13 webinar and in the survey indicated that homeless services providers are challenged to engage Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs). Working together to advance collaboration will result in increasing the availability of and access to mental health care for project participants.
  - ii. Applicants that demonstrate firm written commitments from LMHAs will be awarded full points on this scoring criterion.
    - Commitments from any other healthcare resources, such as healthcare systems or substance use disorder treatment services, will be awarded partial points.
- d. In order to make the most of this funding opportunity, the CoC will require projects to use SOAR to connect people to mainstream benefits and will provide guidance and support to Applicants to structure the Supportive Services request to fund these positions.
  - i. Applicants for Rural Set-Aside funds must request the maximum allowed—20% of funds requested as part of the project—for capacity building activities.
  - ii. Also, if awarded funds, grantees must use 50% or more of those capacity building funds to implement this CoC Plan at the project level.
    - An example of a capacity building activity is staff training to become a SOAR-trained case manager. Other examples are listed in the NOFO on page 21.
- e. Commitment of units must be documented by a formal agreement such as a letter of commitment or a contract. Applicants will be required to submit a copy of the formal agreement as part of the application in response to the CoC's RFP. A letter of commitment template will be available in the application materials.
- f. Note: "Eligibility for the project must comply with HUD program and fair housing



requirements. Eligibility criteria cannot be restricted by the eligibility requirements of the health care service provider” (NOFO, page 49).

| Project | Healthcare Resource | Date available | Value of commitment for substance use disorder treatment or recovery providers | Value of commitment for other healthcare resource |
|---------|---------------------|----------------|--|---|
|         |                     |                |  |   |

**C. CoC’s Current Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness**

**1. The CoC does not have a CoC-wide strategy to identify, shelter, and house people.**

- a. Much of the CoC’s vast geography is without any functional street outreach services, although we know the need exists to identify and connect with households in the most rural parts of the state. Street outreach is a critical component in a successful Coordinated Entry implementation, as it is often used to both identify and provide access to people who may not be served otherwise.
- b. Where street outreach exists, it should be targeted to identifying unsheltered people and connecting them to immediate resources to resolve their housing instability while they are searching for permanent housing.
- c. Street outreach must be connected to tools like culturally appropriate mental health care.
  - i. Based on feedback from the survey, 51% of homeless service partners believe their community does not have a street outreach strategy or are unaware of a street outreach strategy.
  - ii. CoC lead agency staff agree that there is often no cohesive street outreach strategy in many communities. There is broad diversity in the availability of street outreach across communities, and the intended function of street outreach varies greatly, depending largely on geography and funding.
    - 1. Informal street outreach tends to focus on identification, but not with sufficient resources to provide immediate access to temporary or permanent housing.
  - iii. Applicants applying for street outreach as a Supportive Services Only (SSO) project must be able to clearly describe a strategy to connect participants to both immediate crisis housing, including the use of Coordinated Entry to identify people experiencing unsheltered homelessness or people with severe service needs.
  - iv. Street outreach must prioritize unsheltered households and persons with severe service needs for emergency lodging and permanent housing.
  - v. Street outreach should consist of formal, coordinated partnerships, and describe

how the project will be marketed to the community and providers not connected to the administration of the street outreach.

- d. The intent of Street Outreach programs funded through this initiative is to identify the most vulnerable people and resolve the immediate housing crisis for both the short term and the long term and to ensure that emergency lodging is truly short-term emergency lodging and not a permanent housing substitute.

## **2. Current Street Outreach Strategy**

**Note: This section needs more input from CoC members**

- a. Strategy to regularly engage PEH
- b. in the locations where they reside
- c. “specific strategy for engaging those with the highest vulnerabilities”
- d. “CoCs must demonstrate their current strategies to:
  - i. ensure that outreach teams are coordinated;
  - ii. ensure that outreach is frequent, by describing the days and times outreach is conducted each week;
  - iii. help people exit homelessness and unsheltered homelessness;
  - iv. ensure specific engagement strategies will engage individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the highest vulnerabilities and will use culturally appropriate strategies;
  - v. use the outreach teams to connect individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing; and
  - vi. hire people with lived expertise of unsheltered homelessness to conduct outreach”.
- e. “CoCs must identify evidence-based practices used to conduct street outreach and local strategies used that are based on data and performance.”

## **3. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing**

- a. The CoC’s strategy for providing immediate access to low-barrier shelter and temporary housing involves identifying high-performing communities in our service area, examining the factors in their success, and replicating those strategies at a CoC Level, to guide further development and implementation.
  - i. While many respondents (65%) state that they provide access to immediate low-barrier shelter or temporary housing, almost all respondents identified a need for more access to immediate shelter and greater coordination with developers, local government, and private landlords.
    - 1. The 2020 Gaps Analysis identified regional differences in shelter bed availability and the need for more emergency shelter with fewer eligibility restrictions, such as being a survivor of domestic violence.
      - a. All regions have some shelter beds, but very few have beds available on a per-capita basis. Many of those beds were unoccupied on the night of the 2020 Point In Time Count.
      - b. If bed availability (including type, number, and location) does not match need, immediate sheltering options are not accessible. Matching availability with need is a priority for the TX BoS CoC.
    - 2. Some CoC communities have responded to unsheltered homelessness by operating low-barrier shelter and temporary housing using converted

hotels that people experiencing unsheltered homelessness can access immediately.

- a. For example, Denton operates hotels that are intended to provide immediate access to temporary housing and create flow through existing shelter capacity.
- b. Show how well it performs at providing low-barrier culturally appropriate access to temporary accommodations (e.g., emergency shelter, especially non-congregate shelter, transitional housing) to all individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness
  - i. This is an area of growth for the TX BoS CoC. Due to the large geography covered, there is wide variation in the strength of communities to provide culturally appropriate temporary accommodations.
    1. Several CoC communities have operated non-congregate shelter in the past, especially during COVID-19 surges, when people were more at risk of illness and even death.
    2. More communities have moved to the non-congregate model since 2020, especially as congregate settings have become less appealing to the people they are intended to serve, for a variety of reasons.
  - ii. The CoC has not yet assessed the effectiveness of these approaches, but anecdotally we can look to the City of Denton who sheltered people in two hotels in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
    1. The strategy performed well at providing low-barrier, culturally appropriate access to temporary accommodations, and it created capacity in existing congregate settings.
    2. Also, New Braunfels and San Marcos have operated non-congregate shelter utilizing hotels with success. Their strategies also performed well at providing low-barrier, culturally appropriate access to temporary accommodations, in communities with no prior access for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
  - iii. Low-barrier shelter and temporary housing is a vital option to offer to persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness who want to live in temporary housing before entering permanent housing which is often true for survivors of domestic violence.
- c. Identify any new practices it has implemented in the geographic area over the past three years and the lessons learned from implementing those practices.
  - i. New practices that were implemented over the past three years include use of non-congregate settings, prioritizing the space in those settings for people with severe service needs who might otherwise need higher-level interventions such as Permanent Supportive Housing, and connecting households to permanent interventions.
  - ii. Lessons learned from those practices include implementing new non-congregate shelter models as a response to unsheltered homelessness without sufficient resources to move those households onto more permanent housing creates a scenario where temporary solutions become long-term and are not appealing to

those that they are intended to target. Pairing non-congregate solutions with supportive services is critical to success.

- d. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Permanent Housing, including the use of a Housing First Approach
  - i. The CoC's strategy for providing immediate access to low-barrier permanent housing has centered on aligning federal resources such as:
    - 1. Continuum of Care (CoC) Program,
    - 2. Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program, and
    - 3. Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and
    - 4. state-level resources like the Healthy Communities Collaborative
  - ii. A Housing First orientation has been ensured through consultation, coordination, and development of written standards and policies and procedures.
    - 1. Also, the CoC has required projects funded under annual CoC Program NOFOs and now this Supplemental NOFO to use Housing First as a guiding philosophy at the project level.
  - iii. Projects using a Housing First approach, that is, implementing Housing First practices and principles, assist people who have histories of unsheltered homelessness to enter permanent housing immediately, without preconditions or requirements to participate in services.
    - 1. Those projects, however, are expected to develop a robust menu of services that attract participants and, to the extent possible, remove the power differential from the client/case manager relationship.
  - iv. The CoC's strategy also involves identifying high-performing communities in the CoC's service area, examining the factors in their success, and replicating those strategies at a CoC Level, to guide further development and implementation.
    - 1. In the poll and survey, 60% of respondents said their communities provide immediate access to low-barrier permanence housing. They also provided comments about their answers, such as the fact that immediate access is part of their program design but it is not possible when the project is operating at full capacity.
    - 2. Many noted challenges with a lack of housing supply, years-long waiting lists for public housing projects, or no public housing in their communities, all of which can hinder access.
    - 3. Others noted their successes, such as establishing homeless preferences in public housing, operating permanent supportive housing, providing intensive case management, and collaborating with community partners to most effectively use the resources that are available.
- e. Demonstrate how well it performs at providing low-barrier and culturally appropriate access to permanent housing to individuals and families who have histories of unsheltered homelessness and the evidence that supports that strategy
  - i. Communities that have performed well at providing low-barrier and culturally appropriate access to permanent housing to people with histories of unsheltered

homelessness have used strategies such as hiring people with lived experience of homelessness and using peer support recovery models in various aspects of the HCRS.

1. Many communities are struggling with unsheltered homelessness and will need to develop strategies that entice people with severe service needs to participate in the resources offered.
- ii. The CoC is drawing from the use of peer support in recovery settings to develop avenues for persons with lived expertise of homelessness to use their experience in a variety of settings, but with a focus on housing.
  1. Through involvement in a four-year research project aimed at investigating the effectiveness of peer support in non-traditional settings, THN is working to develop the evidence to support a certification in peer support for homeless services.
- iii. In the TX BoS CoC many communities do not have permanent housing interventions such as RRH or PSH at all, so there is an opportunity to develop permanent housing options that incorporate best practices such as peer support.
- f. Identify any new practices it has implemented over the past three years and the lessons learned from implementing those practices
  - i. New practices have been implemented over the past three years.
    1. For example, through a partnership between the City of New Braunfels and a private nonprofit organization, a project provides non-congregate, community-based emergency shelter to people living unsheltered in the community.
      - a. Each person in this setting develops a housing plan and works toward the goals in that plan with support from agency staff. Survey respondents described using new practices such as homeless preferences in Public Housing Authority Voucher programs;
      - b. getting involved in moving on strategies in housing voucher programs;
      - c. and promoting a range of housing options, from home repair and accessory dwelling units to zoning changes and urban infill.
  - ii. Lessons learned from those practices include:
    1. All projects funded under this Supplemental NOFO and prior Annual NOFOs have required Housing First as a guiding philosophy at the applicant level, but we are learning that unless the entire community adopts a Housing First/low-barrier approach, that provider will find it increasingly difficult to maintain the level of effort and maintain relationships with public and private partners.
    2. Oversight of Housing First and other concepts that are rooted less in hard data and more in philosophies is challenging.
      - a. The CoC leans heavily on HMIS data, for example, the number of participants exited from a project before 90 days to temporary or unsheltered locations.

- i. That percentage may indicate that the project is having difficulty building relationships with participants or with developing attractive supportive services that participants want to engage with.
  - 3. A number of CoC communities have operated low-barrier permanent housing, both rapid re-housing (RRH) and permanent supportive housing (PSH) for years, and found varying success. Where that PSH or RRH provider plays a central role in the community's HCRS, they find more success.
  - 4. Use what is available in your community in the most collaborative, strategic, and effective ways.
  - 5. Work to take advantage of new funding opportunities, such as CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, that can allow for new program models, new partnerships, and significant changes.
- iii. To receive full points in this section, applicants should connect response to resources identified in 4.A.1.  
*Note: This section will be updated when the projects included in the Priority Listing are identified.*

#### **D. Updating the CoCs Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance**

##### **1. How the current strategies will be updated and enhanced using data and performance**

- a. The CoC and Supplemental NOFO-funded projects within it will continuously review data and best practices and use that information to inform local strategies to reduce unsheltered homelessness by creating accountability for these projects to the local community and assembling groups of local stakeholders including the PWLE Workgroup to evaluate and monitor these projects using quarterly reporting, HMIS data, feedback from partners and other localized strategies.

##### **2. Regarding street outreach, the strategies that are proposed for funding under this NOFO are:**

- a. Street outreach projects are accountable to the community, not only to their own project or agency.
- b. Street outreach must connect people to immediate housing interventions.
- c. Street outreach must identify, engage, and serve people who are unsheltered or who have histories of unsheltered homelessness and who have severe service needs.
- d. Street outreach will be connected to Coordinated Entry.
- e. Street outreach will be connected to HMIS.

##### **3. The CoC will continue identifying high-performing communities funded through this initiative in the CoC's service area, examining the factors in their success, and replicating those strategies at a CoC level, to guide further development and implementation of these projects and strengthening the CoC's strategy to identify shelter and house individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and severe service needs**

- 4. CoC will use specific data points, performance, and best practices to expand and improve the performance of:**
- a. Street outreach--demonstrate street outreach is connected to coordinated entry or HMIS and how it will incorporate new partners (e.g., business owners, law enforcement, healthcare providers) into its street outreach strategies
    - i. Street outreach should be connected to HMIS and, where available, Coordinated Entry to promote quick identification of individuals and connection to resources to resolve unsheltered homelessness.
      - 1. In the TX BoS CoC some communities are incorporating CE into street outreach, and a variety of partners contribute to HMIS. Street outreach projects funded under this initiative should incorporate new partners and operate effectively in more communities.
      - 2. For example, a few communities in our CoC incorporate a diverse stakeholder group, Denton, Killeen, and Lubbock (among others) have homeless outreach street teams (HOST) through their police departments.
        - a. Denton includes medical personnel in their street outreach. where these cross-sector partners have access to Coordinated Entry workflows and contribute to HMIS.
        - b. Many communities, such as Denton, involve city government staff (parks and recreation, code enforcement, public health) and faith communities in their outreach activities.
      - 3. Applicants to street outreach under this initiative are encouraged to look to existing peer networks to identify best practices, think creatively about solutions for their community, and propose street outreach activities consistent with this plan.
  - b. Providing access to low-barrier shelter and temporary accommodations, including any new practices and activities that would be funded through an award under this NOFO
    - i. The practices proposed for funding under this NOFO are:
      - 1. Providing access to low-barrier shelter and temporary accommodations will, from the beginning, focus on helping people to obtain permanent housing.
      - 2. Emergency lodging is a temporary, short-term activity and not a long-term solution and must add to the existing strategy, and not replace or fund existing activities.
      - 3. Street Outreach should be connected to a strategy to provide immediate access to short term accommodations.
    - ii. New practices and activities that would be funded through an award under this NOFO will be identified when the projects included in the Priority Listing are identified.
  - c. Rapidly housing individuals and families who have histories of unsheltered homelessness in permanent housing
    - i. The practices proposed for funding under this NOFO are:
      - 1. Housing Interventions must add to the existing strategy, and not replace or fund existing activities

2. Housing resources funded under this NOFO must target people living unsheltered, or with histories of unsheltered homelessness.
  3. All projects must employ Housing First.
  4. Housing projects are encouraged to promote and provide peer support services as a component of Case Management and Supportive Services activities.
  5. Housing projects under the Rural Set-Aside may request emergency lodging, but as a support to housing, not as a primary intervention
- ii. One of the 7/13 webinar attendees wrote a comment that captures the frustration that many people experiencing homelessness, service providers, and other CoC interested parties:
    1. "Tools/solutions should include landlord incentives and risk mitigation funds to increase access to housing; the housing market has grown so competitive and created more barriers for people to access stable housing."
    2. The CoC is proposing projects that will capitalize on funding that is available and activities that are within our control to increase access to housing opportunities for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and who have severe service needs in our rural and more suburban communities.
  - iii. New practices and activities that would be funded through an award under this NOFO will be identified when the projects included in the Priority Listing are identified.

## **E. Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness**

### **1. How the CoC will ensure that resources funded under this Special NOFO serve individuals and families who are currently unsheltered or have histories of unsheltered homelessness**

- a. The CoC will adopt prioritization strategies that prioritize unsheltered homelessness as a primary assessment factor for these resources. By-name case conferencing will be employed to ensure fidelity to the established prioritization criteria and to ensure projects are prioritizing people living unsheltered
- b. The CoC will hire additional technical assistance, compliance, and monitoring staff for additional capacity at the CoC lead agency.
  - i. The launch of projects awarded under the Rural and Unsheltered set-asides should start with a series of CoC meetings and in-depth trainings for providers around topics such as effective street outreach, Coordinated Entry, case conferencing, eligibility verifications, HUD compliance, policy and procedure workshops, and other technical assistance.



- ii. That start-up support is recommended by HUD regional technical assistance contacts, the three HUD Field Offices in Texas, and the Community Investment Committee of the CoC Board. The CoC will group the providers in cohorts of Unsheltered recipients and a single cohort of Rural recipients to provide peer support, development of CoC leadership, and promotion of best practices from the beginning of this project
- c. In addition to the ongoing monitoring of project data, staff will conduct desk monitoring and client file reviews. The CoC will develop trainings for program managers and for administrators to include topics such as the COSO Internal Control Integrated Framework, 2 CFR 200, and other topics, to promote middle management stability and growth of case management and supportive services capacity over the lifetime of the projects. Case Managers will thrive in a supportive environment.
- d. CoC Lead agency staff, in partnership with the Applicant, Local Homeless Coalition (LHC), the local Coordinated Entry Planning Entity, local governmental entities, and cross-sector partners will meet to orient the community to the goals of the projects, evaluate the efficacy of these projects regularly, and correct as needed to ensure that the projects continue to meet the needs of the community and serve the intended participants.
- e. The CoC will post quarterly reports for all agencies awarded under this NOFO on the CoC's website, not to shame or intimidate, but in an effort to promote a transparent culture of accountability to the communities we serve.

**2. How the CoC's prioritization strategies will contribute to reducing unsheltered homelessness within the CoC's geographic area**

- a. The CoC will prioritize households for these resources in partnership with the CoC's Coordinated Entry Steering Committee and the local Coordinated Entry Planning Entities.
  - i. These groups are diverse in geography, so we expect prioritization to evolve over time; but initially the CoC will reorganize the existing Coordinated Entry priority factors to emphasize the relative weight of a person sleeping outside in relation to the remainder of the existing factors, such as survivor status, age, and COVID-19 risk factors.
  - ii. The CoC is currently in the process of a CoC-level Coordinated Entry evaluation to improve the efficacy of CE in the TX BoS CoC, and staff plan to incorporate recommendations from the analysis into future work plans for CE.
- b. Additionally, in the spirit of "nothing about us, without us," the CoC's Persons with Lived Experience Workgroup will provide input into, and ultimately approve, the CoC's prioritization of these funds. This group will hold the CoC accountable to targeting people living in unsheltered locations and people with severe service needs through regular oversight and monitoring of performance outcomes.

**3. The CoC's strategy for ensuring that resources provided under this NOFO will reduce unsheltered homelessness**

- a. Using Coordinated Entry and Project enrollment data as well as PIT data, STELLA-P and LSA, the CoC will evaluate the trends of unsheltered homelessness at the CoC level and also at the county level, but more important, the specific households that are served with these projects.
  - i. Staff plan to keep close watch on known communities in our CoC with high levels of unsheltered homelessness and will adjust enrollment targets, prioritization factors, and performance benchmarks, as necessary.
  - ii. Our hope is to foster an environment of local accountability and community buy-in to evaluate whether these projects meet their intended function—to serve people that are unsheltered, or have histories of unsheltered homelessness. Over the long-term these projects will reduce levels of unsheltered homelessness in the community.
- b. In addition to the Community Orientations used to bring stakeholders to a shared understanding of the intent of the project, the CoC proposes to use that same group as an ongoing accountability mechanism. The CoC will coordinate meetings of all stakeholders, including the recipient, the Local Homeless Coalition, the local Coordinated Entry Planning Entity, local governmental entities, and cross-sector partners to ensure the projects continue to meet the needs of the communities.

**4. How the CoC will adopt program eligibility and coordinated entry processes that reduce unsheltered homelessness**

- a. The CoC will incentivize the targeting of unsheltered homelessness at the applicant level prior to project award. Applicants that commit to serving people living unsheltered as a primary focus (at least 80% of participants) will score higher in the application process for that factor, and that goal will also become the performance expectation for the project and will be evaluated regularly.
  - i. Only projects with the lowest barriers to entry will be included in this CoC Plan. The CoC does not allow additional eligibility criteria such as prior shelter enrollment, familial size, or any specific diagnosis.
- b. The CoC will require street outreach funded under this initiative to participate in CE and to target that outreach to underserved communities. The CoC will make HMIS licenses free to groups funded under this initiative that have not previously participated in HMIS.
  - i. In addition to initial adoption of alternate prioritization processes for these projects, the CoC will evaluate the intended and actual consequences of changes to the Coordinated Entry process. The CoC will not use assessment “scores” as the basis for enrollment into any project; rather, the score will inform the intervention type, and other factors specific to the individual or household will determine the order of enrollment.

- ii. The CoC expects that these changes will influence unsheltered homelessness, although it is hard to say to what extent. Staff hired at the CoC lead agency and at projects through this supplemental NOFO will lead the efforts to prioritize unsheltered homelessness.

**5. How the CoC will use street outreach to connect unsheltered people with housing resources**

- a. The CoC will not recommend any street outreach projects that are limited in scope or are not accountable to the entire community.
  - i. That is, project-level street outreach will not be funded as an\ Supportive Services Only (SSO) project. These project types are screened at threshold for accountability to the larger community and must have a clearly described housing strategy.
    - Such projects may request emergency lodging under the Rural Set-Aside but will not be funded without a clear housing strategy that must be approved by the Local Homeless Coalition and the Coordinated Entry Planning Entity. Bonus points will be given to street outreach projects that leverage private short-term housing resources.

**6. Additional steps the CoC is taking to ensure that people who are unsheltered or have histories of unsheltered homelessness are able to access housing and other resources in the community, including steps to increase access to identification, providing housing navigation services, and providing access to health care and other supportive services.**

- a. Many communities in the TX BoS CoC have taken steps to promote quick access to essential documentation that will promote faster lease-ups. The presence of housing navigation, health care access, or supportive services alone does not necessarily equate to access to housing.
  - i. The CoC plans to do deeper analysis in the communities where these activities are more common, like Denton, Abilene, and Corpus Christi, to determine the best practices in these communities as well as areas for growth, and to scale these strategies to the CoC level, to the extent that is possible.

**F. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making**

**1. Demonstrate that PEH, especially PLE of unsheltered homelessness, are meaningfully and intentionally integrated into the CoC decision-making structure.**

- a. The CoC has been engaged in the process of intentionally engaging PLE into the decision-making structure for a number of years and has consistently maintained seats for CoC Board members with lived experience of homelessness.
- b. In addition to the one seat that is required to be filled by a PLE, the CoC has filled other seats with PLE every year. Those seats on the CoC's main decision-making body—that acts on behalf of the CoC and holds the authority to vote on policies—is a direct way that PLE are integrated into decision making for the CoC.

- c. In the spring of 2022 the CoC Board voted to add a seat to the board to be filled by a Youth Action Board (YAB) member, reinforcing the importance of intentionally integrating youth PLE into the decision making structure. The CoC is recruiting members for the YAB that will guide the CoC's efforts to develop a plan to prevent and end youth homelessness.
  - i. PLE have also traditionally served on CoC Committees and on CoC governance entities in local areas (Local Homeless Coalitions and Coordinated Entry Planning Entities).
  
- d. Also, THN staff and the Strategic Planning Committee developed a CoC Strategic Plan in 2021. One of the strategies in the plan was to involve more persons with lived experience in CoC activities, including decision making. THN staff have developed a Persons with Lived Experience Workgroup. Staff, including PLE on staff, and another PLE who is also a service provider, researched best practices, actively recruited nominees, interviewed them, and accepted all nominees to serve on the inaugural committee. The committee began meeting in August 2022.
  - i. The group will function similarly to other CoC Committees, to give their input and expertise on pertinent topics. Members will provide direction on the updating of the Strategic Plan and the 2023 Action Plan that will continue implementing the Strategic Plan for year two.
    - Having PLEs' guidance on the strategic plan that directs the CoC's development, is a key way to represent voices of people the HCRS is serving and to ensure that the CoC is responsive to PLEs' needs.
    - The workgroup will also lend their expertise to planning for CE, HMIS, PIT Counts, and other CoC activities. Members will also provide direction to staff about the most important and urgent needs to address, based on their participation in the HCRS.
  - ii. And the PLE Workgroup will consider approving the priorities in this CoC Plan and the entire Consolidated Plan under the Supplemental NOFO.
  - iii. The CoC lead agency employs PLE, who routinely give input from their experience and expertise. While hiring PLE is a priority for THN, applicants to various funding opportunities are incentivized to find ways to give PLE decision-making power within projects, like hiring them.
  - iv. And while these positions are not a formal part of the decision-making structure of the CoC, project-level staff are often recruited for CoC committee seats and CoC Board seats.

**2. Demonstrate how the CoC encourages projects to involve individuals and families with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness in the delivery of services**

- a. CoC lead agency staff model involving persons with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness as agency employees, on the agency's board of directors, on the CoC Board, and on CoC committees.

- b. The CoC also incentivizes projects to engage PLE, by awarding points in the scoring for CoC Program funding, using criteria such as:
  - i. The organization solicits feedback through truly anonymous satisfaction surveys
  - ii. The organization hosts regular focus groups and/or listening sessions with participants
  - iii. The organization has a standing consumer advisory committee
  - iv. A current or former participant(s), or someone with current or past lived experience of homelessness, sits on the Board of Directors or other equivalent policymaking entity
  - v. The organization employs current or former participants in the project
- c. Staff also regularly ask about PLE involvement when discussing ongoing project development and performance improvement. And staff encourage service providers to hire PLE and to take advantage of their expertise from going through the housing crisis response system and their valuable role as peer support for other PLE.
- d. On the CoC level, THN staff, two agencies in BoS communities, and two cohorts of peers (so far) are participating in a four-year research study on peer support. PLE were recruited to participate in the peer support training and experiential learning activities within the agencies and with mentorship by mental health peer support specialists.
  - i. The research project is studying peer support in non-traditional settings, including homeless services. It is being administered by Via Hope with the possibility of developing a peer support specialist certification in homeless services for Texas. A certification could not only enhance peers' skills and add to their expertise but also give them new career opportunities in the homeless services sector.

**3. Clearly describe the meaningful outreach efforts (e.g., street outreach, social media announcements) to engage those with lived homelessness experience to develop a working group (e.g., advisory committee, subcommittee)**

- a. CoC lead agency staff publicized the opportunity for PLE to serve on the workgroup in the TX BoS CoC section of THN's website, in the CoC newsletter which is sent to the CoC's email list, on social media, through staff contacts with providers, and by asking service providers and CoC general members to invite PLE to nominate themselves. Also, staff worked with two PLE—one THN employee and one service provider in a BoS community—as planners to help develop the group. Those two PLE will also co-facilitate the group, along with several other staff members.
- b. THN has a long history of engaging PLE. A recent example is the 2021 Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Academy that THN held for PLE who wanted to learn more about advocacy. In the five-month program, cohort members learned about organizing, systemic barriers, storytelling, and networking with members from across the state. The goal was to enhance people's advocacy skills for and comfort with self-advocacy and advocacy on behalf of other people.

- c. THN has also intentionally reached out to PLE to serve on the Independent Review Team that scores the project applications in the competitive application process for CoC Program funding.

**4. Attach a letter of support for this Special NOFO from a working group comprised of individuals with lived experience of homelessness.**

- a. The CoC will seek a letter of support from the PLE Committee for the CoC Plan, including its priorities, under this Supplemental NOFO. The letter will be attached to this plan after the PLE Workgroup signs it.

**5. Discuss how the working group is intentionally used in the CoC decision making process (i.e., what type of voting authority do the members have on policy, the ability to influence local policy, and priorities that impact those experiencing homelessness)**

- a. THN and the CoC Board members continuously evaluate the CoC governance structure to ensure that it is working effectively for CoC members. The committee is in its formation, but the goal is to fully integrate it into the CoC governance structure. CoC lead agency staff envision that the PLE Workgroup will play these roles, among others that members may identify as their priorities:
  - i. The group will guide staff on revising the CoC Strategic Plan, which has goals related to CE, HMIS, data, funding, improving access to housing and services, educating the community, influencing policymakers, and similar priorities.
  - ii. Like other CoC committees, the group has the authority to recommend policies to the CoC Board
  - iii. Staff will seek input and recommendations from the committee about CoC activities: CE processes, CE prioritization, HMIS, RRH, PSH, Housing First, how the CoC can better support local communities, and the like.
  - iv. Members will tell us what they want to address and what needs to change and improve in the CoC, then work with us to plan, implement, and evaluate changes.
- b. Also, the board approved adding Seat 16 to their body to be filled by a Youth Action Board member. Staff will present a proposal for a similar process to fill Seat 1 on the CoC Board with a member of the PLE Workgroup. That would give the committee true voting power on the board.
- c. The PLE Workgroup will also have the opportunity to sign a letter of support for the CoC Plan and the CoC priorities outlined in the CoC Application and the project application(s) under this Supplemental NOFO. Members will also be asked to approve the Coordinated Entry prioritization standards for projects funded under this NOFO.

**6. Attach a letter signed by a working group comprised of persons with lived experience of homelessness that meets the requirements of Section VI.F.1.g of this NOFO supporting the CoC priorities outlined in the CoC Application and the project application(s) submitted as part of the application process.**

- a. The CoC will seek a letter of support from the PLE Committee supporting the CoC priorities outlined in the CoC Application and the project application(s). Also, THN staff will inform the members when the Consolidated Application for this NOFO is available and will consult with them for their input.
- b. The letter will be attached to this plan after the PLE Workgroup signs it.

## **G. Supporting Underserved Communities and Supporting Equitable Community Development**

### **1. Describe their current strategy to identify populations in the CoC's geography that have not been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness**

- a. The CoC has begun this work. In 2020, the CoC contracted with HomeBase, a technical assistance provider, to conduct a gaps analysis. That gaps analysis gave important information about racial groups that are disproportionately represented in the homeless population compared to the general population.
  - i. Strategies and activities to address a number of recommendations in the gaps analysis were included in the CoC Strategic Plan for 2022-2024 and the 2022 CoC Action Plan that implements the strategic plan.
  - ii. Three activities in the strategic plan and two selected to be carried out in the 2022 action plan relate to identifying and addressing racial inequities in our homeless crisis response system, as evidenced by HMIS data and PIT Count data.
  - iii. The lead agency is working with the Strategic Planning Committee and the Persons with Lived Experience workgroup to develop this CoC Plan, which will be incorporated into the CoC Strategic Plan and the 2023 CoC Action Plan. Also, the lead agency anticipates updating the gaps analysis to capture newer data and potential trends.
- b. As of the writing of this plan, the Data Team for the CoC lead agency is analyzing data to identify the top five BoS counties with the highest racial disparities. Then, staff will work with those five communities to address the disparities using research-backed approaches and monitor progress and changes.
- c. Also, the CoC lead agency is reviewing proposals submitted in response to a Request for Proposals for a consultant to develop a strategic plan for the agency that includes efforts to further racial equity within the agency and potentially within the CoC.
- d. The CoC lead agency has also contracted with a technical assistance provider to conduct an evaluation of Coordinated Entry (CE). That evaluation will include analyzing CE data in HMIS. That data will then be compared to PIT Count data and Census data on the general population in the CoC to identify populations underserved by the homeless crisis response system.
- e. All those planning and evaluation activities will reveal other underserved populations that the CoC will develop strategies to address.

### **2. How underserved communities in their geographic area interact with the homeless system, including a description of those populations.**

- a. In the TX BoS CoC, underserved populations vary from community to community. Survey respondents gave details about the underserved community in their cities and towns. Some characteristics given are: youth ages teens to 24; Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC); people who identify as LGBTQ; people with dual diagnoses (mental health diagnosis and substance use disorder diagnosis); people living in poverty; people living with disabilities; formerly incarcerated people; migrant farm workers; people living in tent cities; people who cannot access primary health care; people who earn low wages; and people without access to transportation.
- b. Respondents also described how underserved communities interacted with the homeless system, and those also varied from area to area. The responses ranged from “they do not, unless outreach is provided,” to “mostly through soup kitchens and the police or EMS” and from “We serve as resource center to connect our unserved communities to the homeless system” to “Coordinated Entry Access Points.”

**3. The current strategy to provide outreach, engagement, and housing interventions to serve populations experiencing homelessness that have not previously been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness.**

- a. Since underserved groups have different strengths, needs, and barriers across various communities, strategies to provide outreach, engagement, housing interventions, and supportive services to assist them also vary. THN received more than thirty responses to a question about how current strategies could be improved to better assist underserved populations. Some examples include:
  - i. “Engagement through lived experience boards, having multiple opportunities to provide feedback without fear of retribution, developing leadership material for lived experience boards”
  - ii. “Thru Coordinated Entry which provides a means of access, assessment, prioritization and referral of individuals and families seeking housing and services.”
  - iii. “Reduce barriers such as IDs, background checks and offer more locations as well as transportation for homeless to shelters and cooling/warming centers. Provide outreach within communities for instance - phone, computer - some access point in high traffic areas for homeless to use when in need or distress.”
  - iv. “Additional outreach and support is needed to fully engage underserved populations.”
  - v. “write letters, e-mail, call, or visit public officials at the city, county, state and federal levels asking what they are doing about homelessness and/or mentioning”
  - vi. “Need to participate with the Local Homeless Coalition”

**Next Steps**

Once this plan is approved by the CoC’s PWLE Workgroup and the CoC Board, the next steps for this plan are to incorporate it into the current CoC Strategic Plan and into the 2023 CoC Action Plan which guides the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The three-year Strategic Plan and one-year CoC Action Plans are developed by THN staff with input from CoC general members and are overseen by the Strategic Planning Committee and the PWLE Workgroup. Implementation of this plan will begin with the Notice of Conditional Award by HUD anticipated in early 2023. Projects awarded under the Supplemental NOFO should plan to start operations in Calendar Year 2023.