

Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

TX BoS CoC Committees Policy

Approved 2/27/2019	
Revised 4/24/2019	CoC Board changed "HMIS Committee" to "Data Committee"
Revised 5/22/2019	CoC Board added section on subcommittees
Revised 11/18/2020	Definitions added, role of chair and committee support revised, voting procedure clarified, addition of "Funding and Policy Decisions" section
Approved 1/19/2022	Guidelines for elections added
Approved 12/20/2022	Several procedural items were removed from the document to allow more flexibility in how committees operate. Sections added to give staff more guidance on developing a committee.
Approved 4/26/2023	Addition of the requirement that all CoC committees have one member with lived experience of homelessness.

Overview

Committees are an important part of the TX BoS CoC's governance structure. The CoC may establish committees, subcommittees, or work groups that are made up of CoC members and other interested parties. Committees are created with the approval of the CoC Board, in order to assist the CoC in carrying out mandated activities. CoC Committees are also the primary mechanism for CoC members to affect decisions made by the CoC Board. This document establishes the roles and responsibilities of committees within the governance structure of the TX BoS CoC.

Committees can be used to get feedback from general members, ensure transparency in CoC processes, and allow general members to gain knowledge about governance processes within the CoC.

Definitions

Committee – the action planning components of the system. In these bodies, strategies are developed, deepened and expanded into timed work plans. Committees may also be directly responsible for specific strategies or exploring options to solve particular concerns.

- Committees serve the CoC Board. Unless authority is otherwise designated by the CoC, committees must make recommendations to the CoC Board for approval
- Committees are the primary mechanism for TX BoS CoC members to submit proposals to the Board.



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Committees may be on-going for an indeterminate period of time or ad hoc (meaning time-limited), depending on the purpose of the committee.

Subcommittee – a committee within a committee created to focus on a particular issue within the committee’s purview. Subcommittees may be established by the CoC Board, or by the committee.

Work Group – a work group does not create policies or make recommendations on behalf of the CoC. Work groups function as a way for CoC members to share information and ideas about a specific topic. They may report back to the CoC Board, a committee or subcommittee, as needed.

General Member - Anyone who lives and/or works in the CoC’s geographic area and has an interest in ending homelessness. Any general member can serve on a committee.

Establishing CoC Committees, Subcommittees, and Work Groups

Committees

The CoC Board will establish committees, as necessary to ensure all CoC responsibilities are fulfilled according to HUD regulations. CoC staff may recommend committees to the CoC Board and provide the rationale, goals, expected outcomes, and proposed members. Once committees are approved by the CoC Board, CoC staff will be responsible for recruiting committee members, arranging a time and place for the initial committee meeting, and presiding over the committee until a governance structure is established.

Subcommittees

If a CoC committee wants to create a subcommittee, it may do so using one of the following processes:

- If the subcommittee is time-limited and task-oriented, the committee may create the subcommittee without prior approval from the CoC Board.
- If the subcommittee is ongoing and/or if it influences policies that are developed, that is, if it will propose action items to its committee which will then propose them to the Board, then the staff or committee chair must propose to the CoC Board that the subcommittee be established, using the same process for proposing a CoC committee.



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Work Groups

Work groups may be formed and given specific responsibilities, as needed, by the CoC. Their establishment does not need to be approved by the CoC Board.

Purpose

Expertise

Generally, committees serve as a way to get feedback that is informed by the expertise of the committee members. Though any General Member can serve on a committee, committees are best served by members who are able to give meaningful input about the subject matter being discussed. This expertise may come from their experience working at an organization involved in serving people experiencing homelessness (i.e. homeless shelters, public housing authority, etc.), or by their life experiences as a member of a subpopulation (i.e. lived experience of homelessness, veteran, etc.).

Engagement

Committees can serve as a way for General Members to gain knowledge about governance processes within the CoC. Additionally, committees serve as a way for THN staff to build meaningful connections with CoC General Members, to be able to solicit feedback, when required for funding and policy processes.

Transparency

By involving General Members in decision-making, THN staff maintain transparency in funding and policy changes that may affect the functioning of organizations that receive funding and technical assistance through the TX BoS CoC.

Developing a Committee

Before starting a committee, staff must have a clear understanding of the committee's purpose for existing. Because of the amount of time and resources that are required, staff must be able to make the case that this committee needs to exist as a committee and not as a recurring information session or workgroup.

Staff may begin by answering questions such as:

- *Will this committee be making requests to the CoC Board for changes in policy or funding?*
- *What is the final product of the committee?*
- *Who needs to be informed about progress?*
- *How will this information be reported, and who will need to receive it?*
- *What is the timeframe for committee activities?*
- *What kind of input is needed, and what kind of expertise would allow for that input?*



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

- *Would it be beneficial to involve people in positions that allow them to disseminate information to other organizations in their community?*

Staff must also decide if the committee will be a standing committee that will work on an ongoing issue for an indeterminate period of time, or if it will be an ad hoc committee that will be disbanded after the issue is resolved.

Once these questions are answered, staff may present their request to create a committee to the CoC Board, using a Board Action Request. If approved, staff may begin recruiting members from the General Membership.

Goals and Expectations

Once staff understand the purpose of the committee and the general timeline for the committee, it may be beneficial to develop a more detailed plan for achieving committee goals. This can be done by staff, or it could be developed through a consensus process with the committee members (see Decision-Making for more information). How this plan is developed depends on the purpose of the committee and the amount of time committee members are able to devote to the task.

Orientation

Staff are expected to develop orientation materials that are targeted towards General Members with varying levels of understanding of the TX BoS CoC and what THN does as the collaborative applicant. These may be delivered to the committee at their first meeting.

Discussions

Staff are responsible for making sure that all committee discussions are focused and productive. Staff supporting a committee are expected to review facilitation materials to learn the basics of meeting facilitation and develop a timed agenda prior to each meeting. Staff are responsible for making sure that all topics in the agenda are covered, while also creating space for open discussion.

Transparency

To ensure transparency, staff or a committee member must keep minutes during each meeting. These notes will be sent to the committee sometime before the next meeting, so that members can review them and approve them at the beginning of the next meeting. Once approved, these minutes must be uploaded to the THN website by staff.

CoC Staff Support

It is most helpful to have multiple staff members supporting a committee, for continuity and for capacity. Staff are ultimately responsible for tasks such as preparing meeting agendas and materials, facilitating committee meetings, taking notes, monitoring attendance, and providing



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

reports about committee work to the CoC Board. The committee may delegate procedural and administrative tasks, as needed. The committee may establish positions such as chair, co-chair, or secretary to assist with these tasks.

Committee Membership

Committee membership may include any Continuum member. CoC members may participate in more than one committee.

CoC committees aim to be diverse in terms of geography, race, gender, socioeconomic status, lived experience, job positions, and age. Specifically, membership will aim to represent:

- Persons with lived experience of homelessness (who are currently or formerly homeless)
- Persons of color
- Persons who identify with LGBTQA
- Veterans experiencing homelessness
- Single adults experiencing homelessness
- Youth experiencing homelessness
- Families experiencing homelessness
- Victim Services
- Mental/Behavioral Health
- Health/Medical
- Education
- Local Government
- Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice
- Public Housing Agency
- Faith Community or faith-based organization
- Business
- Continuum of Care (CoC) Program recipients
- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program recipients
- Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) recipients

Lived Experience of Homelessness

All committees are required to recruit at least one person with lived experience of homelessness as a member of the committee.

Committee members with lived experience of homelessness may have first-hand understanding of the consequences of policies to be considered. Adding a person with lived experience to committees can yield input that might remind the committee members why they are there - to help the homeless exit homelessness. Committee members with lived experience of



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

homelessness may be able to share their input on what the whole process of seeking homeless services was like for them. They may have ideas based on their experience that can help make the services being provided to clients more accessible and less traumatizing.

Committees members recruited for their lived experience must also meet the other requirements of membership on the committee, such as knowledge of, or participation in, a specific issue area. For example, members of the Data Committee must be users of the CoC's Homeless Information Management System (HMIS). A committee member recruited to the Data Committee for their lived experience of homelessness must also be an HMIS user.

In the case of a committee with geographically-based membership, staff must try to recruit at least one member with lived experience of homelessness, but are not required to do so if they are unable to find a candidate that meets the requirements of the position. This caveat is intended to acknowledge that many areas of the CoC are sparsely populated, and committees with geographically based membership often have a difficult time recruiting anyone for these areas. Staff seeking a member with lived experience for these committees may consider looking at more populous regions to fulfill this role.

Committee members with lived experience of homelessness may serve a specific function on the committee, as determined by the committee, or they may simply be present to offer their perspective as needed and as they feel comfortable.

Staff recruiting committee members with lived experience of homelessness may request guidance from the Lived Experience Committee on how to find a suitable candidate.

Staff must try to ensure that people recruited to a committee for their experience of homelessness are provided with support and mentorship if they have not served on a similar governance body previously.

Committees may offer compensation to the person with lived experience for their participation if appropriate, and if the budget allows. Committee members are not required to be paid for their time serving on a committee. The intent of compensation is to make up for any financial losses that the member may have by participating in the committee (such as the committee taking the place of paid work, or requiring the member to pay for transportation to a location with internet access), but this may not be necessary or desired by the member. Staff recruiting members with lived experience of homelessness should discuss this with the member one-on-one.



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Decision-Making

There are many ways in which committees can make decisions. Staff will decide which method works best for the functioning of the committee, or allow the committee to decide.

Parliamentary

One common way to make decisions is the highly formalized parliamentary procedure. Bodies that follow parliamentary procedure generally use votes to make decisions, using a set of standardized rules called Robert's Rules of Order.

One benefit of using parliamentary procedure is that it provides a ready-made process for decision-making that many committee members may already be familiar with. This could allow the committee to quickly begin making decisions.

However, it may take some time for those committee members unfamiliar with the procedure some time to learn the rules. Additionally, parliamentary procedure required the meeting to meet quorum to make any decisions, which may become difficult if the committee does not have consistent attendance. Voting by quorum requires everyone to participate, even those members that are not as knowledgeable about, or that do not have a stake in, the decision being made.

A majority or 51% of the committee membership constitute a quorum at committee meeting using parliamentary procedure for decision-making. No business will be conducted unless a quorum is present. An informal meeting may be held, but no votes may be conducted. Unless otherwise specified in the Governance Charter or by the CoC Board, votes of a quorum of the full committee membership require only a simple majority of those present and voting.

Votes of the full group may only be called under the following circumstances:

- 1) At a scheduled committee meeting, or at a special meeting announced to the full committee membership; or
- 2) Remotely (by email), as required by the committee Chair and announced to the full committee membership. In this case, the committee will follow the Action without a Meeting Policy.

Consensus

Another common decision-making method is a consensus-based process. There are several ways to use this method, but it generally involves allowing all members present to have a chance to present their case for or against the decision being made. If there are objections that cannot be resolved, then the item is tabled. Consensus based decision-making may feel less formal to people used to parliamentary procedure.

This method of decision-making is often more engaging discussion because committee members can agree ahead of time to terms of how they will interact with each other. Also, those that don't have a strong opinion can opt out of the discussion, so the conversation may be more



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

relevant. However, this method can allow one person to stall a decision, which could be a problem for making time-sensitive decisions.

Changing Committee Status

Committee support staff must inform the CoC Board of any changes in the committee's status as an active standing committee. Examples of changes in status include 1) going on hiatus, 2) meeting on an ad hoc, or as-needed, basis, and 3) dissolving the committee due to inactivity or completion of the committee's goals.

Other Considerations

Funding and Policy Decisions

As part of their role within the governance of the CoC, committees may make recommendations about CoC policy and funding to the board through a board approved process.

Committees will not make policy-related decisions on behalf of the CoC. Committees also may not make funding-related decisions on behalf of the CoC, but if the board determines that it is necessary for a committee to assist with allocating a pool of funding, the board must first approve a committee's scoring and methodology for making funding or award recommendations, through a board approved process. As part of this process, the board will determine whether the committee may make funding or award recommendations directly to the funder, or if the committee will be required to make funding or award recommendations to the board for approval before sending the recommendations to the funder.

Elections

Each committee will determine their own process for selecting new members. If the committee determines that they will select members through an election by the CoC General Members, they will follow the process outlined in this document. THN staff will facilitate the voting process.

Candidate Requirements/Eligibility

All committee members must be general members of the TX BoS CoC. Anyone who works or lives in the CoC's geographic area, and has an interest in preventing and ending homelessness, including all housing and homeless services projects in the CoC's geographic area, are considered to be members of the CoC.

Committees may fill seats based on regional representation, field of specialization (i.e., veteran homelessness, youth homelessness, etc.), or other qualifications.



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Announcement to General Membership

THN staff are responsible for ensuring that a broad audience of CoC general members are notified about upcoming nominations and elections for CoC Committees.

Staff may make nomination and election announcements via the monthly TX BoS CoC Newsletter, CoC General Meetings preceding the election, and THN social media accounts.

Nominations

Each committee will determine their own timeline for elections. This timeline can include preparation time, the dates when nominations and voting will take place, when announcements of the election will take place, and the date of new member orientation.

Generally, the nomination period will last 3 weeks. Committees and THN staff may lengthen the nomination period, if needed to reach out to more candidates.

As facilitators of the nomination process, THN staff are responsible for the creation of and distribution of the electronic nomination form. The nomination form may collect information about the candidate's past relevant experience with homelessness, their experience with the subject matter of the committee, their experience serving on committees or boards, and why they want to serve on the committee. Staff will notify candidates that this information will be made publicly available as part of the election process if they are selected as nominees.

THN staff will post the electronic nomination forms to the Texas Homeless Network website, on the Committees page. Staff will make themselves available to those that need different accommodations to be able to submit a nomination. Nominations may take place by phone or email, if nominees are not able to use the electronic form.

THN staff will also include electronic nomination forms in all announcements, including those in the TX BoS CoC monthly newsletter, CoC General Meetings, and social media. Staff are responsible for outreach to a diverse slate of potential candidates.

THN staff will inform nominees of their selection as soon as possible after the nomination period has ended.

Voting

Voter Eligibility

All general members of the TX BoS CoC may vote in committee elections. Anyone who works or lives in the CoC's geographic area, and has an interest in preventing and ending homelessness, including all housing and homeless services projects in the CoC's geographic area, are considered to be members of the CoC.



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

If committee members are being selected by region, voters may only select a nominee from the region in which they work or live. If the voter lives in a different region than the one in which they work, or work in more than one region, they may vote for nominees for all of the regions in which they live and/or work.

Voting Process

Generally, the election period will last 3 weeks.

As facilitators of the election process, THN staff are responsible for the creation of and distribution of the electronic voting form. The form will generally include the information provided by nominees in their nomination form.

THN staff will post the electronic voting forms to the Texas Homeless Network website, on the Committees page. THN staff will make themselves available to those that need different accommodations to be able to vote.

THN staff will also include electronic voting forms in all announcements, including those in the TX BoS CoC monthly newsletter, CoC General Meetings, and social media.

THN staff are responsible for tabulating the votes at the end of the election period. More than one staff member must verify the election results. If this is the first committee member selection, the results will be reviewed and verified by the CoC Board. If this is not the first committee member selection, the results will be reviewed and verified by the committee.

THN staff will inform nominees whether or not they were selected for a seat on the committee as soon as possible after the election period has ended. Election tallies will not be posted online, but the newly selected committee members may be announced on the Committees page of the THN website.

Runoff Election

In the event that two or more nominees receive an equal number of votes, a runoff election will be held. Unless otherwise directed by the CoC Board, the election will be performed in the same manner and method as the original election.

Dispute and Violation Reporting

CoC members may report violations of this policy, or dispute the results of elections, if they believe that misconduct has taken place. The CoC Board will review all disputes and violation reports to verify the validity of the election results. The board may direct THN staff to hold a new election in the event that the election results are determined to be invalid due to a violation of election policy or an unresolved dispute.



Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

To report a violation of election policy or to dispute an election, CoC members may fill out the Dispute and Violation Reporting Form.

Code of Conduct / Conflict of Interest / Recusal Process for CoC Committees

No member may participate in or influence discussions or resulting decisions concerning the award of a grant or other financial benefits to the organization that the member represents or to themselves as individuals. Therefore, any individual participating in or influencing decision making must identify actual or perceived conflicts of interest as they arise and comply with the letter and spirit of this policy. Disclosure should occur at the earliest possible time and, if possible, prior to the discussion of any such issue. Individuals with a conflict of interest should recuse themselves from discussion and voting on any issue in which they may have a conflict. An individual with a conflict of interest, who is the committee Chair, shall yield that position during discussion and abstain from discussion and voting on the item.

Annual written disclosure statements will be provided to each member. Members will not be permitted to participate in any discussion or vote until their signed statement is on file. All voting members shall have the right to recuse themselves from voting on the matter without providing a reason.

