

2014 HOME Consortium Retreat

August 11th, 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sequoia Landing
7163 Littlerock Road SW
Olympia, 98512

ATTENDEES

HOME Consortium Members: Commissioner Karen Valenzuela, Commissioner Cathy Wolfe, Neil McClanahan - Chair, Jeannine Roe, Sirena Painter, Virgil Clarkson.

HCAC Members: Paul Knox - Chair, Trudy Soucoup, Dianne Harris, Schelli Slaughter, Danny Kadden, John Masterson, Charles Shelan, Tammie Smith, Theresa Slusher.

County staff: Don Sloma – Director, Gary Aden Social Services Program Manager.

Facilitator: Karen Parkhurst – Thurston Regional Planning Council

Purpose: *Given the HOME Consortium's limited resources, can we agree on our 3-5 year priorities?*

Welcome: Introductions were made.

Revenue Picture: Gary Aden gave an overview of the various funding sources including grants that have been available to the Consortium for project funding. It was noted that the projections for all sources in the next few years will remain stable with no projected increases or decreases expected. The baseline is the funding received and made available in 2014.

Lay of the Land: Theresa Slusher, Homeless Coordinator provided several graphs and pie charts including Consortium Spending by Source and by Activity for PY2013 and PY2014. Attendees had questions about the information and a discussion followed about funding sources, statistics used and how the data was gathered.

One graph titled Three-Year Snapshot of Consortium Spending prompted a question by Mr. Sloma who asked about the significant difference between Rental Assistance provided in 2013 versus 2014. Ms. Slusher pointed to funding for The Peoples House in 2013 as the reason for the difference.

On the pie chart titled Consortium Spending by Activity, a question was asked for an explanation about the difference in “services” provided for 2013 versus 2014, specifically why the spending for 2014 is shown as zero percent. Ms. Slusher responded that she was unclear what was included in “services” and would need more information from staff.

The pie chart titled PY2013 Consortium and Leveraged Spending on Homeless System by Source drew several questions from attendees. Ms. Slusher stated that despite the title, this chart is not about spending. The chart depicts various agencies and entities by acronym but does not include dollar amounts or percentages. A question was asked if this graph included both Housing and Homelessness programs. Ms. Slusher responded that it is strictly about Homelessness.

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Ms. Roe asked for examples of the chart piece labeled “donations/fundraising”. Mr. Knox responded with examples such as Community Investment Partnership, United Way, Community Foundation and other sources.

Ms. Soucoup would like to see statistics on the number of people served by housing.

Mr. Sloma stated that the information provided was very basic and requested that the graphs and pie charts be updated with actual dollar amounts. Several other attendees agreed that having that information would be helpful.

Regarding the percentages and performance measures presented, Ms. Parkhurst asked members the following: Are these numbers correct? Are we comfortable with them? Do they get us where we need to be?

Mr. Sloma described the sudden cold weather last winter which prompted a shelter emergency. The Health Department responded to the call to arrange for immediate shelter for many homeless individuals. Through coordination of several community entities, spaces were provided for that crisis. Mr. Sloma feels strongly that there is not sufficient shelter for winter or in the case of a catastrophic emergency.

Ms. Parkhurst asked members to consider what efforts could be made to get additional funding and also if there are more efficient ways to get funding?

Other Initiatives:

Mr. Shelan asked how the Treatment Sales Tax is being used. Mr. Aden provided an example of a TST funded program that served homeless persons operated by NW Resources that provides intensive case management including treatment for mental health issues, substance abuse and rapid re-housing.

Ms. Slaughter reminded the group that revenue collected from document recording fees (2160/2163) was predicted to last just three years but is now going on year five and cannot be relied on to last indefinitely.

Discussion about priorities:

While members agree that the community needs a safety net, several members felt strongly that the focus of HOME Consortium spending should be on providing shelter and affordable housing rather than on homeless services.

It was agreed that there will likely never be enough money to go around, but that the deployment of the resources available should be looked at more closely.

Mr. Sloma reminded the group about the vision of the Thurston Thrives Housing Strategy:

Housing supports neighborhood stability, and people’s health and well-being. Affordable, adequate and safe housing for all achieved through collaborative efforts of the public, private and non-profit sectors.

Ms. Painter would like assistance for the Bucoda and Tenino areas. She pointed out that they have zero shelters. She stated that this summer the city park had to be closed due to so many homeless people camping in the park. The south county schools have high numbers of low-income youth, homeless teens and no affordable housing. In addition, poor public transportation (no set schedule or bus stops) makes it difficult for individuals to access services. Ms. Parkhurst stated that in planning for future shelters and homes, access to services or transportation is essential.

Ms. Slusher pointed out that the number of homeless individuals has gone up every year which prompted some members to question if we are really making a difference. Others reiterated they feel there is not enough housing and that more shelters are needed.

Commissioner Karen Valenzuela feels that based on the growing number of homeless, we are not making a dent in reducing homelessness.

Ms. Roe would like to know the age breakdown of the homeless population because she sees many younger folks in the downtown Olympia area, especially during the summer. Ms. Painter agrees that finding out who the population is will provide the key to determining why they are not being served.

Mr. Shelan reminded members that there is a great need for Youth Housing. He stated that many young people are coming out of the Foster Care system without support, access to housing, or job skills.

Mr. Knox feels that rapid re-housing and more efficiently run shelters should be priorities.

Commissioner Karen Valenzuela asked that providers meet people where they are, whether that is dealing with mental illness, substance abuse or joblessness and that we must respond to what is in front of us.

Rapid re-housing is considered to be a best-practice and Commissioner Karen Valenzuela stated that according to the agencies providing rapid re-housing there is plenty of housing available. Some members pointed out, this type of service is only successful for those individuals with an income stream. Rapid re-housing does not serve those who are homeless due to health concerns or disabilities.

Coordinated Entry is considered to be a best-practice however, Ms. Slusher reminded members that while the Coordinated Entry program began receiving funding a couple of years ago, the plan has not been implemented and is still in draft form. She stated that the policies and procedures are not in place and so "the button has not been pushed".

Ms. Slusher offered to have 2013 performance data available for the September HOME Consortium meeting and will also add the Thurston Thrives Housing Strategy vision statement to the top of the pie chart of Spending by Activity.

In closing, Ms. Parkhurst checked with the group and there was agreement in the following:

- The HOME Consortium is relatively comfortable with its current process.
- The HOME Consortium will find resources for a more thorough collection of data and analysis of the data.
- The HOME Consortium wants to prioritize and maintain the existing programs.
- The HOME Consortium will find someone to tell the story of the good that is being done, including the amount of money spent, so the public has a better understanding of how we are providing housing and treating homelessness.

Due to a lack of time the Community Investment Partnership and Thurston Thrives were not discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15

