

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

Vision

The Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care (KS BoS CoC) has put forth efforts to reduce the number of individuals experiencing street/unsheltered homelessness; as well as those with a history of unsheltered homelessness and severe service needs. The development of the plan included both survey questions and a broad geographic participation to ensure coverage across the 101 counties within the KS BoS CoC. The overarching objective of this plan is to provide a framework for the CoC to implement strategies aimed at the reduction of unsheltered homelessness and to streamline resources to those of the highest severe service needs.

KS BoS CoC's Priorities in the Plan

- All applicants must demonstrate a community-wide commitment to the project. Therefore, applicants will be asked to identify partners in the development of the application and in the administration of the project.
- All applicants, excluding HMIS projects, must leverage housing, healthcare, mental healthcare and/or access to mainstream benefits in the operation of the project.
- All applicants, excluding HMIS projects, must develop or implement the CoC wide Landlord Recruitment/Engagement Strategy.
- All applicants, excluding HMIS projects, must describe how their project will implement Housing First principles and practices.
- All applicants, excluding HMIS and CoC Planning projects, will participate in the Coordinated Entry System and have a representative at the Regional Case Conferencing Meetings.
- All applicants must take an active role in identifying, engaging, and serving persons who are unsheltered, persons with histories of unsheltered homelessness and people with severe service needs.
- All applicants, excluding HMIS and CoC Planning projects, must prioritize people who are unsheltered, or with histories of unsheltered homelessness, and people with severe service needs.
- Supportive Services Only (SSO) Projects must provide information (i.e., eligibility requirements, location, access procedures) about all available low-barrier shelter or permanent housing opportunities within their region. Regions are required to list these services in the CoC Regional Plans.
- Street outreach activities must be strategic, culturally appropriate and coordinated. It should also strive to immediately resolve their housing crisis as part of a larger, community-wide housing strategy, with access to housing resources.
- Each outreach project will provide their individual outreach frequency including the days and times in their application.
- All applicants must describe how the project will identify and serve “underserved” communities, or those communities that have not previously been served by the homeless system at the same rate that they experience homelessness in the community.
- All applicants will assist households with providing connections to low-barrier and culturally appropriate temporary accommodations (e.g., emergency shelter, non-congregate shelter, transitional housing) as available.

- All applicants must demonstrate how persons with lived experience of homelessness (PWLE) will meaningfully contribute to the project design and administration of the project.
- All applicants must agree to update their operational strategies dependent on data and performance measures every year for the initial term of their grant.
- All applicants are encouraged to employ staff who can assist individuals with their SSI/SSDI applications through the SSI/SSDI Outreach Assessment and Referral (SOAR) process.
- Supportive Services Only (SSO) projects are encouraged to form partnerships that would connect their program participants to housing and healthcare resources.
- Street Outreach projects are encouraged to incorporate business owners, law enforcement, healthcare providers and mental health partners into its street outreach strategies.
- Street Outreach projects are encouraged to hire those with lived experience of homelessness to conduct street outreach activities.

P-1c. Landlord Recruitment

P-1c (1.) – Current Strategy:

Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care does not have a CoC-wide strategy for landlord recruitment that covers the entire 101-county geographic area. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the housing crisis and led to unprecedented economic and housing instability across the state of Kansas. However, the individual agencies within the CoC have conducted community level landlord engagement to assist program participants with finding housing and providing landlord recruitment. In rural areas, housing service providers have to rely heavily on their relationships with landlords because there is low housing stock and minimal rental opportunities. While every county in the Kansas Balance of State has not implemented each of the following landlord recruitment strategies, it is the goal of the KS BoS CoC to implement each of them as resources improve over the next three years.

- Provide landlord engagement, education, and outreach efforts.
- Employ full time landlord liaisons to provide mediation and assistance to identify units. The housing authority employs these liaisons.
- Building a list of landlords that are willing to rent to persons in supportive housing programs.
- Provide referrals and online resources to find landlords who are willing to take housing vouchers.
- Provide a monthly list of open units in the community.
- Advocate for the program participant with landlords to attempt to have them accept the household that do not meet their normal criteria for tenancy.
- Agencies attempt to find resources to dedicate staff time to provide housing navigation services to develop landlord relationships and tracking vacancies.
- Develop relationships with local housing authorities, inform potential landlords of the benefits of participating in Section 8 programs, and inform landlords of agency benefits such as case management, home visits, landlord/tenant mediation, and assistance with a move out if issues cannot be resolved.

- Encourage landlords to inform housing providers of units as they become available.

P-1c (1.a.) – Overall Strategy Performance:

This strategy has worked well to identify units to house 786 households from September 1, 2021, to August 31, 2022, across the entire KS BoS CoC geographic area.

P-1c (1.b.) – Strategy Performance in Historically Underserved Areas:

While this strategy worked well to identify new units in areas where the CoC has not historically been able to identify units; however, it has not been accomplished at a rate sufficient to address the need. Most of these landlord engagement strategies are operating while underfunded or entirely unfunded. Therefore, organizations attempting to house those experiencing homelessness are forced to add these practices on top of case managers who are already at full capacity. Organizations that serve areas with a higher concentration of subsidized and/or affordable housing tend to identify more units than areas with lower amounts of subsidized or affordable housing opportunities.

One of the primary goals for the KS BoS CoC will be to establish and strengthen relationships with landlords and property management companies that have not historically accepted tenant based rental assistance to improve the move in rates and length of time homeless performance measures.

P-1c (2.) – New Practices:

The introduction of EHV programs and ESG-CV-2 programs added new practices and resources within the past three years. These practices included the implementation of the following:

1. Hiring of Housing Navigators
2. Risk Mitigation Funds
3. Hiring of Landlord Liaison Managers
4. Landlord-Tenant Mediation
5. Rental Availability Lists
6. Landlord Risk Reduction Program
7. Landlord Lease-Up Funds

Communities in the KS BoS CoC report the following lessons learned from implementing these new practices:

- In communities with universities, the competition for rental units is high which requires incentives for landlords to rent to those experiencing homelessness over the student population.
- The new programs and processes must have a seamless process for both landlords and tenants to successfully transition them from homelessness to a unit designated for a housing program.
- Organizations had to perform a more intensive landlord recruitment in the midst of COVID including negotiating lower rents to meet FMR and reaching out to landlords that normally don't work with rental assistance programs.
- Organizations adopted a "Drive By" approach to find housing units that were not listed on normal housing list websites.
- Provide non-financial incentives such as recognition awards.

P-1c (3.) – Updating Landlord Recruitment Strategy:

The CoC plans to collect data and input utilizing surveys from recipients and subrecipients of HUD funded programs as well as from individuals experiencing homelessness. To update this landlord recruitment strategy, the CoC will utilize HMIS and CES data to determine the success rates of program with landlord incentives and when they are not. These data elements include:

- Length of time homeless from initial identification to move in date
- Percentage rates of successful move ins
- CES Exits to permanent housing destinations

Additional data elements outside of HMIS will include:

- Utilization rates of Emergency Housing Vouchers
- Number of total and new landlord partnerships
- Location of properties renting to housing program participants

P-3. Current Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

P-3a & 3b – Current Street Outreach Strategy

The 2022 Point-in-Time count showed that the Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care has experienced an increase of 14% from the 2020 count and the sheltered count decreased by 7%. Discussions revolving around the reasoning behind these results point towards the COVID pandemic. Shelters had to reduce capacity to slow the spread of COVID which led to more individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The KS BoS CoC does not have a CoC-wide street outreach strategy; however, regions have reported the implementation of the following strategies:

- Organize street outreach teams funded through PATH programs.
- Employ housing program coordinators and staff to areas where those who are unsheltered are residing or visiting and connect them to the homeless crisis system through the Coordinated Entry System.
- Providing referrals to emergency shelters.
- Provide in person case management services.
- Partner with a broader network of programs, services, or staff who are likely to encounter individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Including law enforcement, first responders, hospitals, behavioral healthcare providers, child welfare agencies, homeless education liaisons, community health action teams, workforce systems, faith-based organizations, local businesses, and other community-based organizations.
- Combine street outreach with providing basic necessities such as bus passes, food, hygiene products, clothes, and assistance to get state identification.
- Host events to provide those experiencing unsheltered homelessness with hot meals, free groceries, toiletries, and haircuts.
- Provide education to the community regarding homelessness such as speaking to representatives of other agencies, organizations, churches, businesses and speaking at events.
- Advocate to ensure the decriminalization of homelessness such as encampments and trespassing ordinances in parks.

- Coordinate a mobile canteen to travel to areas where individuals are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
- Provide information designed to identify unsheltered victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.
- Invest time in building trusting relationships with those experiencing unsheltered homelessness or with histories of homelessness.
- Developing pilot programs for people with lived experience to become Peer Support Specialist for Street Outreach.
- Provide educational trainings to Outreach teams on public health responses to pandemic circumstances and other public health concerns.

P-3a (1.) – Outreach Teams

Street outreach teams utilize coordinated outreach efforts begin by identifying encampment areas and assigning outreach workers to travel to those sites to provide direct services. The street outreach teams meet those experiencing unsheltered homelessness wherever they are at and enter them into the Coordinated Entry System (CES). These teams will coordinate with a broad network of programs, services, and staff who are likely to encounter individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The teams work with the street outreach programs include law enforcement, first responders, hospitals, behavioral healthcare providers, child welfare agencies, homeless education liaisons, community health action teams, workforce systems, faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations. As the KS BoS CoC has a wide geographic need and opportunities, each CoC region will detail what outreach activities and practices are available in their Regional Plans.

P-3a (2.) – Outreach Frequency

Street Outreach will be conducted by outreach teams three to four days a week between Monday to Friday. The outreach teams will target areas where households experiencing unsheltered homelessness reside or frequently visit such as soup kitchens, day shelters, food banks and etc. The frequency of the outreach varies because Outreach projects are operated by different organizations. Each outreach project will provide their individual outreach frequency including the days and times in their application.

P-3a (3.) – Help People Exit Homelessness and Unsheltered Homelessness

After a new household has been identified as homeless, a CES assessment is completed, and the information is reported into HMIS. For Victim Service Providers (VSPs), they enter the assessment for those fleeing from domestic violence into an HMIS comparable database. Once the CES assessment has been conducted and entered into the system, the staff worker adds the individuals and families onto the Regional Coordinated Entry Queue also known as the Community Queue. This Community Queue is based on the regional boundaries of the Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care. Each community queue provides a CES list that is reviewed and updated during Regional Case Conferencing meetings. These meetings are centered around the providers within each region coming together to either refer individuals and families experiencing homelessness to housing opportunities or to assist in a households' transition from homelessness by providing case conferencing/connections to mainstream benefits.

P-3a (4.) – Culturally Appropriate Strategy for those with the Highest Vulnerabilities

Regional Case Conferencing meetings not only assist households directly into permanent housing but to also ensure that the connection is culturally appropriate. To ensure appropriate linkages, all regional providers attend their Regional Case Conferencing to discuss the following:

- Who has the highest vulnerabilities?
- Are there households on the list with vulnerabilities that were not reflected in CES assessment such as traumatic brain injuries, developmental disabilities, or other circumstances that may led to a greater chance of death?
- Who is currently working with the household?
- Did the household receive any past services that were unsuccessful? If so, what should we do different to have a successful outcome?
- Which mainstream referrals should be best suited to assist in the housing process? (i.e., referrals to mental health providers, community health workers, substance abuse services, etc.)
- Are there communication barriers?

These culturally appropriate case conferencing strategies connect households to services and ensure collaboration with the household to accomplish the housing goals. In addition, the CES list does not disclose race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation to ensure the equality of referrals and services.

P-3a (5.) – Use Outreach Teams to Connect Households to Permanent Housing

Outreach teams connect households to permanent housing by utilizing the Coordinated Entry System (CES) and operating as a mobile Access Point or connecting them to the CES Lead Agency’s Remote CES Assessment Process. This assessment is the common assessment used by the entire KS BoS CoC geographical area to determine vulnerabilities and acuity. During the Regional Case Conferencing meetings, referrals to permanent housing opportunities are provided in accordance with the CES Policies and Procedures and CoC Priorities.

P-3a (6.) – Hire Persons with Lived Expertise to Conduct Street Outreach

Engaging the unsheltered population requires a specific skill set and knowledge regarding the struggles of mental illness, chronic substance abuse, victimization, the trauma of abuse, etc. The KS BoS CoC is encouraging projects to hire persons with lived expertise of homelessness by providing bonus points in the Rank and Review process to projects that commit to this.

P-3.b. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

P-3b (1.) – Current Strategy to Provide Low-Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing:

The CoC’s current strategy to provide immediate access to low-barrier shelter and temporary housing for individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness includes the following:

- Provide immediate access to shelter and temporary housing as beds become available.
- Providing motel vouchers while those experiencing homelessness are waiting on housing availabilities.
- Building partnerships with Street Outreach teams to move those experiencing unsheltered homelessness directly into shelter or hotels.

- Immediate connection to Coordinated Entry partners and access points.
- Providing specialized access to emergency shelter resources to all survivors fleeing domestic violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking. While Domestic Violence Shelters are not available in each county, every county in Kansas is covered by a local Victim Service Provider. Organizations can provide transportation to the nearest Domestic Violence shelter or provide gas cards.
- Provide transportation, dependent on available funding, to the nearest city with emergency shelters if the city does not have one.
- Temporary housing opportunities follows a Housing First approach.
- New Jerusalem in Newton County allows men with criminal records and SUD disorders.
- Assist those experiencing homelessness to pay for residential fees at Prairie View Shared Living with the assistance with KDADs Supported Housing Funds.
- The Lawrence Community Shelter in Douglas County has reduced barriers to accessing shelter such as changing ban policies, no longer issuing long term bans, and no longer doing background checks. As well as analyzing shelter rules to determine if it is for safety or control, if leadership determines a rule does not have a safety component it is deemed unnecessary.

P-3b (2.) – Overall Strategy Performance:

The CoC has experienced a difficult time incorporating temporary housing accommodations such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, and motel vouchers due to the large rural geographical area of Kansas where these services do not exist, or the nearest services may be hours away from where the homeless household originated. Due to this scarcity, homeless households are experiencing low shelter/transitional bed availability if there is a shelter nearby and hotel vouchers do not last long enough to end their homelessness. However, in counties that have emphasized the vital need for shelter and temporary housing especially during high-risk seasons (summer and winter) these counties have sheltered hundreds of individuals and families. The influx of emergency hotel vouchers from ESG CV also showed the widespread need for the continuation of temporary accommodations.

P-3b (3.) – New Practices:

Within the CoC Plan Survey, respondents listed the following new practices:

- Housing providers partnering with shelters to provide full rounded case management which assists shelters in providing extensions.
- Butler Homeless Initiative opened a Day Shelter which provides additional opportunities to create deeper relationships with clients and stronger partnerships with employers, landlords, property managers, mental health clinics, substance abuse centers, housing assistance programs, etc.
- Creating non-congregate shelters.
- Adopting Built for Zero practices for data analysis and increasing connections to shelter and housing.
- Expanding relationships with motels/hotels to provide temporary accommodations.

Lessons learned include the following:

- Case management capacity does not meet the high volumes of individuals seeking services. Case Management needs an expansion to increase shelter turnover rates and exits to permanent housing.
- Shelter bed capacity does not meet the high volumes of individuals seeking beds. In areas where shelters exist, they operate at full capacity.
- Lack of affordable housing stock for extremely low-income housing and supportive housing affects the agency’s ability to locate affordable housing for their program participants.

P-3.c Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low Barrier Permanent Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

P-3c (1.a.) – Current Strategy with Housing First Approach:

The CoC evaluates each CoC funded agency utilizing HUD’s Housing First Self-Assessment. The Project applicant’s Self-Assessment report score is a customized local criterion score for the Annual NOFO and will be used to evaluate Housing First best practices for agencies funded under the Unsheltered and Rural Special NOFO. The CoC has written expectations of Housing First practices in the CoC Written Standards, Coordinated Entry and HMIS policies and procedures for housing program enrollments, CES enrollment, data collection and reporting. The Coordinated Entry team facilitates CES Case Conferencing meetings to connect those who are experiencing homelessness to ensure that Housing First practices are utilized during referrals and housing program enrollments.

The Collaborative Applicant, Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition, partnered with Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) to provide Housing First training, consultation, and technical assistance, for the implementation and operation of all KS BoS CoC programs seeking to implement high fidelity Pathways Housing First (PHF) programs to address homelessness for individuals with psychiatric disabilities experiencing homelessness.

P-3c (1.b.) – Current Strategy Identified in “Leveraging Housing Resources”:

The KS BoS CoC has required all permanent housing resources and programs within the Special NOFO to follow Housing First Principles. This includes the dedicated and prioritized units that will support program participants under the CoC Special NOFO programs.

Dedicated Units for the Special NOFO Applications

- Tenants to Homeowners Housing Units Commitment to Douglas County
- ATeam Estates Housing Unit Commitment MOU with DVACK
- Crawford County Housing Authority Housing Commitment to SEK-CAP
- J & C Rentals Housing Commitment to Butler Homeless Initiative
- Metro Home Housing Commitment for Butler Homeless Initiative

P-3c (2.) – Overall Current Strategy Performance:

The current strategy for providing low-barrier and culturally appropriate access to permanent housing are increasing. In accordance with the 2020 to 2021 System Performance Measures, 2,430 households were housed in permanent destinations. Out of 928 households who exited from the Coordinated Entry System 647 households (70%) exited to permanent destinations. To

ensure culturally appropriate access is provided, the KS BoS CoC will conduct an Equity Analysis and there will be training provided if improvements are identified.

P-3c (3.) – Supporting Evidence:

In late 2020, the KS BoS CoC moved HMIS vendors which enabled the CoC to collect data and evaluate it systematically. While ongoing yearly trends are not available for analysis, the CoC has evaluated and presented data in the 2022 Gaps Analysis to support the use of current operational strategies or to identify areas for improvement. The Gaps Analysis included 2020 and 2021 data from the Coordinated Entry System (CES) Evaluation Report, Grant Inventory Worksheet, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Housing Inventory Count (HIC), Point-In-Time (PIT) Count and System Performance Measures (SPMs).

P-3c (4.) – New Practices and Lessons Learned:

Within the CoC Plan Survey, respondents listed the following new practices:

- Creating additional relationships with property owners for scattered site housing opportunities.
- The CoC created a uniform transfer policy and procedures for victims of domestic violence.
- Non-HUD funded entities such as Public Housing Authorities have implemented Coordinated Entry referrals and attendance at Case Conferencing meetings.
- The CoC has begun to work with Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties that have units available for households who are homeless

Lessons learned included the following:

- Domestic Violence providers report that applicants for Permanent Housing have a deeper sense of security after the implementation of a transfer policy.
- The agencies that participated in CES for the first time learned that attending case conferencing meetings was a good opportunity to partner with the other providers that are also working with their clients.
- Housing providers who refer to KS BoS CoC’s Coordinated Entry System, have realized that the Coordinated Entry System is quick and easy to use and to help families who are homeless access safe, decent, and affordable housing and appropriate services.

P-4. Updating the CoC’s Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance.

P-4 (1.a.) – Improve and Expand the Performance of Street Outreach:

The CoC will continually review data and best practices to improve the performance and expand the street outreach programs and activities within the CoC. This will create accountability to each funded program and the CoC as a whole. The HMIS Oversight Committee will review Street Outreach HMIS, PIT, STELLA, and Longitudinal Statistical Analysis (LSA) data elements. The Equity Committee will review data through an equity lens and the Collaborative Applicant will collect feedback directly from those experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are engaging in Street Outreach programs.

This analysis will provide the framework needed to evaluate measures for success or areas that need improvement. This will provide the Collaborative Applicant a guide to design new trainings for case management, supportive services, housing first principles, motivational interviewing and incorporating reducing harm strategies.

P-4 (1.b.) –Street Outreach Connected to CES and HMIS:

The Street Outreach programs will utilize the new Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) map feature to track encampments and the movement of unsheltered persons across the entire KS BoS CoC. This new feature will be available prior to the implementation of projects funded under the Supplemental CoC NOFO and it will focus on the use of geolocation technology. Street Outreach teams will be mobile Access Points for the purposes of Coordinated Entry, and they will be required to provide access to the Coordinated Entry Assessments where persons are experiencing unsheltered homelessness whether via paper assessments or remote assessments.

P-4 (1.c.) –New Practices and Activities Under this Award:

The CoC will incorporate a detailed Street Outreach Policy that will encompass Street Outreach providers and non-providers. All regions are encouraged to create Homeless Outreach Teams that incorporates non-homeless service providers such as law enforcement, healthcare providers, health insurance providers, business owners, school liaisons, substance abuse providers, and mental health providers. The policy will also focus on the movement of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, original locations, if those individuals are requested to relocate and provide guidance on how these non-homeless service providers should interact with those experiencing unsheltered homelessness. All Special NOFO project applicants will be required to incorporate this policy into their program design.

P-4 (2.a.) – Improve Access to Low Barrier Shelter & Temporary Housing:

Data to Improve Access to Shelter/Temporary Housing:

1. Housing Inventory Count (HIC)
2. Shelter/Motel Voucher Enrollment Data from HMIS
3. Transitional Housing Data from HMIS

The 2021 HIC shows that twenty-two (22) out of thirty-two (32) Emergency Shelter programs in the KS BoS CoC geographic area are being capturing data in HMIS or an HMIS comparable data base. KS BoS CoC will work to partner with the shelter programs that are on the HIC but not in HMIS to improve access. KS BoS CoC will also work to provide housing first and low barrier trainings to shelters and transitional housing programs.

P-4 (2.b.) –Expand Low Barrier Shelter & Temporary Housing:

The 2022 CoC GAP analysis demonstrates a small finite number of both congregate and non-congregate emergency shelters throughout the CoC. Several of the CoC’s membership agencies have applied for funding through the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) to enhance the use of non-congregate emergency shelter options in their communities, these funds are primarily used to purchase short term hotel stays for program participants.

P-4 (2.c.) –New Practices and Activities Under this Award

The Special NOFO funding will enable the CoC to implement the following new practices and activities:

- All applicants prioritize people who are unsheltered, or with histories of unsheltered homelessness, and people with severe service needs.
- Street outreach activities must be strategic, culturally appropriate and coordinated. It should also strive to immediately resolve their housing crisis as part of a larger, community-wide housing strategy, with access to housing resources.
- All applicants must develop or implement the CoC wide Landlord Recruitment/Engagement Strategy.

The Special NOFO funding will introduce the first CoC funded SSO – Standalone and SSO – Street Outreach programs within the KS BoS CoC.

P-4 (3.a.) – Improve CoC’s Ability to Rapidly House in Permanent Housing:

Data to Improve Rapidly Housing those with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness:

1. Evaluation of Prior Destination Locations to create individualized analysis of final destination outcomes
2. Length of time from Unsheltered Homelessness to Move in Date
3. Comparison of Program Enrollments with Move in Dates vs. No Move in Dates (no move in dates indicate current homelessness).
4. CE Exit Destinations

The KS BoS CoC will utilize the above data measures to determine performance outcomes and will incorporate the results into the annual Gaps Analysis and the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will lay out the best practices to increase the success rates of exits to permanent housing and to decrease the length of time homeless that households are experiencing.

P-4 (3.b.) –Expand CoC’s Ability to Rapidly House in Permanent Housing:

Under the Special NOFO Rural Set Aside Opportunity, the KS BoS CoC will be expanding the Housing Program availabilities with three (3) new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs, two (2) new Rapid Rehousing (RRH) programs and three (3) new Supportive Services Only (SSO) programs to increase services to households that may not need housing level interventions. Under the Unsheltered Set Aside, there are one (1) PSH program, one (1) new RRH program and three (3) new SSO programs to expand the CoC’s ability to rapidly house individuals and families with histories of unsheltered homelessness.

P-5. Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness

P-5 (1.) – Strategy to Ensure Resources Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness:

The HMIS Oversight Committee will lead the evaluation of performance measures including the reduction of unsheltered homelessness across the CoC’s geographic area over a three-year period. This committee will advise the CoC on prominent levels of unsheltered homelessness, program enrollment numbers, recidivism rates for returns to unsheltered homelessness and performance benchmarks. The CoC will incorporate this information into the Annual Gaps Analysis to create an in-depth review of the impact that the projects under the Special NOFO have had on the goal to reduce unsheltered homelessness.

P-5 (2.a.) – Adopting Program Eligibility to Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness:

All projects funded under this Special NOFO will prioritize households that meet HUD’s Category One criteria with an emphasis on those who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness or has a history of unsheltered homelessness. Projects will be evaluated annually to ensure that those experiencing unsheltered homelessness are prioritized, and that projects are following low barrier and housing first principles at enrollment. The CoC Written Standards does not allow additional eligibility criteria such as shelter enrollment, familial size, sobriety, or specific mental diagnosis.

P-5 (2.b.) – Adopting Coordinated Entry Processes to Reduce Unsheltered Homelessness:

The CoC will adopt the following changes to the Coordinated Entry System to reduce unsheltered homelessness.

- All Street Outreach projects funded on this Special NOFO will be required to participate in Coordinated Entry and attend case conferencing meetings to advocate for their clients and facilitate connections to services.
- The CES Case Conferencing meetings will facilitate fidelity to the prioritization criteria to ensure that projects are prioritizing unsheltered households for housing enrollments.
- The Coordinated Entry Committee will adopt strategies to prioritize those experiencing unsheltered homelessness or with histories of unsheltered homelessness.
- The Coordinated Entry Assessment will be redesigned to create a higher emphasis on the vulnerability factors of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness in places not meant for human habitation such as sleeping outside, in cars, in abandoned buildings.

These changes will be coordinated between the CE Lead and the Coordinated Entry Committee. Prior to implementation, the HMIS team, Equity Committee, and a designated group of Persons with Lived Experience (PWLE) will review the impact and potential success/pitfalls that these changes may create. The CoC Steering Committee will vote to approve any changes to the CE Policies and Procedures and/or Coordinated Entry System changes.

P-5 (3.) – Utilizing Street Outreach to Connect to Housing Resources:

The CoC has compared the data of those experiencing homelessness in the PIT and CES Enrollment numbers. The comparison is illustrated in the Annual Gaps Analysis and indicates that the CoC needs a greater emphasis on identifying those who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness especially in the rural counties of Kansas. The CoC has submitted six (6) Supportive Services Only (SSO) programs under the Special NOFO to provide additional case management support to those experiencing homelessness and direct street outreach activities. The support for these programs shows the CoC’s commitment to connect those experiencing unsheltered homelessness with housing resources.

P-5 (4.a.) – Additional Steps to Increase Access to Identification:

The KS BoS CoC will expand the ability to provide remote access to the Coordinated Entry System in rural areas and provide this tool to official/unofficial street outreach teams. The CE Lead is taking additional steps to build further partnerships with non-housing providers but where those experiencing homelessness may present such as libraries, food banks, jails, hospitals, health insurance providers, and substance abuse/mental illness providers.

P-5 (4.b.) – Additional Steps to Provide Housing Navigation Services:

The CE Lead has applied for two SSO-CE grants under this Special NOFO to introduce Housing Navigation Services focused on households on the CE List. By providing direct housing navigation services, it will introduce widespread diversion, rapid resolution and case management for households who are not prioritized for the limited housing services that the CoC has available.

P-5 (4.c.) – Additional Steps to Provide Access to Healthcare and Other Supportive Services:

The CoC and its members are partnering with local health care clinics to access physical and mental health care. The Collaborative Applicant and the CoC Steering Committee has partnered with Kansas Departments for Aging and Disability Services, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the three Managed Care Organizations, and the two Substance Use Treatment Services providers. All healthcare organizations have agreed to participate in the KS Bos CoC CES and will refer people to CE for housing. Along with referrals to CE, the healthcare providers have agreed to assess CoC participants the need for their services, and each healthcare partner, has agreed to educate the CoC about the services they provide during the CoCs monthly membership meetings or at other training sponsored by the CoC or Collaborative Applicant. To track the number of participants who have access to the healthcare through a Managed Care Organization, we added a question to HMIS asking them which MCO they use. This gives us information to show the MCOs that CoC participants are also MCO members.

**P-6. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making–
Meaningful Outreach**

P-6 (1.) – Meaningful Outreach to Engage People with Lived Experience to Develop a Working Group:

In 2022, the KS BoS CoC decided the best way to improve our system was to add a question to the HMIS intake and recertification screens asking participants if they wished to give feedback to the CoC by serving on an advisory committee or workgroup. The CoC is developing language for the general membership to approve to add this new workgroup to the CoC’s Governance Charter. To offer meaningful compensation to those who engage, the Collaborative Applicant is using a part of the CoC Planning Grant match money to pay wages to individuals who serve on CoC sponsored committees and workgroups.

P-6 (2.) – Meaningfully and Intentionally Integrating those with Lived Experience into the CoC’s Decision Making Structure:

The CoC Membership and Nominations Committee is developing a visual orientation package for all new Steering Committee members as a strategy to aid in the transition to the committee. This includes easy to understand visuals of our structure and a list of common terms and acronyms. For people experiencing homelessness, extra steps are being developed to ensure all members have the communication devices to receive and transmit information and to fully participate.

P-6 (3.) –CoC Encourages Projects to Involve PLE in the Delivery of Services:

Under the Special NOFO priorities approved by the KS BoS CoC, all applicants must demonstrate how persons with lived experience of homelessness (PWLE) will meaningfully contribute to the project design and administration of the project. Street Outreach projects are strongly encouraged to hire those with lived experience of homelessness to conduct street outreach activities.

The CoC's current outreach efforts to engage those with lived experience of homelessness in leadership roles and decision-making processes not only include effective social media, virtual Coordinated Entry access points, and other virtual recruitment campaigns. The BoS CoC have developed a formal partnership with the Alliance of Overlooked Neighbors (AON), and they are active members of the Ks BoS CoC. AON membership is distinctly made up of people who are currently experiencing or who have lived experience of homelessness. The Collaborative Applicant currently employs two individuals with lived experience in leadership positions-the CoC's Director of Coordinated Entry Systems and the Director of Community Engagement. KSHC also provides continuing education opportunities for its board members with lived experience of homelessness. Currently, 10% of the CoC Steering Committee's membership is made up of those with lived experience and are provided with ongoing continuing education opportunities.

P-7. Supporting Underserved Communities and Supporting Equitable Community Development

P-7 (1.) – Strategy to Identify Populations:

The KS BoS CoC's strategy to identify populations throughout the CoC's geographic area that have not been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness varies from region to region, but the CoC has initiated the following strategies:

- The CES Annual Evaluation revealed that homelessness disproportionately affects people of color especially pronounced for the Black/African American and American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN) population.
- The Point-in-Time (PIT) data illustrates counties that have those experiencing homelessness but are not located close to existing services.

The Collaborative Applicant supports the work of the Equity Committee which utilizes this data to provide ongoing recommendations to improve the areas of highest racial disparities and the areas that do not have enough services to cover the number of persons experiencing homelessness.

P-7 (2.) – How Underserved Communities Interact with the Homeless System:

The Alliance of Overlooked Neighbors (AON) have assisted the KS BoS CoC to determine how underserved communities interact with the homeless system. The AON has described these populations as individuals experiencing homelessness are more likely to be in "survival mode" and may not be interacting with providers as they are too focused on meeting their basic needs such as finding food to eat and a safe place to sleep. This survival mode makes it difficult to attend housing/provider appointments. These populations may have also turned to substances to make it "easier" to survive for example, staying awake when it is unsafe to fall asleep, feeling warm when it's too cold, and not feeling hunger when there is no food available.

The AON state that even in situations where an individual has been connected to services and/or has received housing a person's thought processes may still be focused on survival mode or on the coping mechanisms (especially the unhealthy ones) may still be present and interrupting their ability to successfully interact with the homeless system.

AON recommends the following methods to improve the ability for underserved populations to interact with the homeless system.

- Improve the relationship and connections between clients and case managers.
- Provide more Peer Support and the Peer should have lived experience.
- The transition from working with a case manager to being without support should be slow and steady.
- Skill building should take place during the transition period to assist them with being without support.
- Case Management services should have consistent standards across organizations and programs such as frequency, quality, and the level of communication.
- Case Managers must understand the client's goals to determine their priorities and help them achieve those goals.
- Case Managers need to have enough capacity to provide individualized intensive support and they should have low caseloads.

P-7 (3.) –Strategy to Provide Outreach, Engagement and Housing Interventions:

The KS BoS CoC's current strategies for providing outreach, engagement, and housing interventions to provide services to underserved populations requires a wide range of strategies to meet the needs in a largely rural geography.

- The CoC utilizes data from HMIS reports, Stella, the annual CES Evaluation and the CoC annual Gaps Analysis to determine which populations may be experiencing homelessness that have not previously been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness in comparison to Census data.
- Established an Equity Committee in the CoC Governance Charter in 2021.
- The Equity Committee is designing an invitation campaign aimed at ensuring inclusion and equity geared towards BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color) throughout the CoC systems including CoC Governance, HMIS, and CES.
- The CoC established a CoC-wide Anti-Discrimination Policy to ensure that engagement and housing interventions are provided with an equity lens.
- CoC agencies seek bilingual employees to break down communication barriers.
- Networking with organizations that specialize with BIPOC and LGBTQ+.

CoC Plan Next Steps

Once this plan is approved by the Continuum of Care, the next steps are to incorporate it into the 2023-2026 KS BoS CoC Strategic Plan. Implementation of this CoC Plan will begin with the HUD Special NOFO Notice of Conditional Awards with a goal to start operations of all projects in 2023.