

Interagency Council Retreat Summary

June 1, 2009

IAC Members Present:		IAC members absent:
Humberto Alvarez (SKCCH/Solid Ground)	Marilyn Mason-Plunkett (Hopelink)	Rhonda Berry (City of Tukwila)
Karen Bergsvik (City of Renton)	Christine VanderWerf (CAC)	Michael Brown (Seattle Foundation)
Dennis Brown (WA State Dept of VA)	Stephen Norman (KCHA)	Mark Dalton (DSHS – Belltown CSO)
Tom Carr (City Attorneys Office)	Alan Painter (City of Seattle HSD)	Dini Duclos (MSC)
Doreen Cato (First Place)	Adrienne Quinn (Seattle Office Hsg)	Clark Kimerer (Seattle Police Dept.)
Lynn Davison (Common Ground)	Michael Ramos (Church Council)	Paul Lambros (PHG)
Charissa Fotinos (Public Health)	Dave Ramsay (City of Kirkland)	Mark Okazaki (Neighborhood House)
Bill Hobson (DESC)	Faith Richie (Valley Cities)	David Okimoto (UWKC)
Bill Hallerman (AHA)	Sue Sherbrooke (YWCA)	Barbara Langdon (EDVP)
Mike Heinisch (KYFS)	Kathleen Southwick (Crisis Clinic)	Marlena Sessions (WDC)
Kate Joncas (DSA)	Jim Theofelis (Mockingbird)	Katherine Van Olst (DAJD)
Emily Leslie (City of Bellevue)	Tom Tierney (SHA)	
Jackie MacLean (King County DCHS)		
Community Members Present:		
Bill Block (CEHKC)	Sola Plumacher (Seattle / Safe Harbors)	Katy Miller (KC DCHS)
Gretchen Bruce (CEHKC)	Cheryl Markham (KC DCHS)	Neil Powers (UWKC)
Kate Speltz (KC DCHS)	Eileen Denham (Seattle HSD)	Vince Matulionis (UWKC)
Kristine Gullin (CEHKC)	David Wertheimer (Gates Foundation)	Judy Clegg (Clegg & Associates)

Welcome, Introductions and Consent Agenda

Stephen Norman and Sue Sherbrooke, IAC co-chairs, welcomed members to the annual IAC Retreat. Marlena Sessions and Katherine Van Olst were unanimously approved for IAC membership. Welcome Marlena and Katherine!

Judy Clegg, facilitator for today's, retreat, noted that the Ten-Year Plan is entering its fifth year and continues to be a critical need within our community. Topics for the day will focus on how the IAC can make the most efficient use of existing resources while also sharing ideas to secure additional resources by becoming more competitive in our local McKinney application and other opportunities.

The agenda for the morning included breakout discussions on six key issues: 1) increasing competitiveness within the McKinney application process; and 2-6) implementation of the key workplans under the Funders Group: Capital Production, Use of Existing Housing, Coordinated Entry for High Utilizers/Vulnerable Single Adults, Coordinated Entry for Families, and HMIS/Safe Harbors. In anticipation of these breakout discussions, the group first heard brief reports on McKinney funding and Safe Harbors implementation.

McKinney-Vento Funding and Scoring Report

Kate Speltz, who, together with Eileen Denham oversees the McKinney-Vento Application, reported that Seattle/King County receives significant McKinney-Vento funding for our local Continuum of Care (CoC). This funding is stable and requires fairly straightforward contract compliance for continued funding. Adding *new* projects to the CoC, however, is a competitive process. Each year, CoC's can apply for additional funding for one new capital project. If awarded funding, the project is added to the local CoC and continued funding for that project is added to the region's baseline funding.

This year, for the first time, our region's application was not competitive and we did not receive the additional funding for a new capital project. We lost points in this year's application because for the last five years or so HUD has emphasized the percentage of McKinney funding going to bricks and mortar projects while our local CoC funding is substantially directed towards services. Additionally, HUD continues to increase the number of points awarded for use of local HMIS systems and we fall short in this aspect in a few key areas. While we have been aware of HUD's shift towards bricks and mortar projects, the heavy emphasis on HMIS and inclusion of new elements for HMIS use were new this year.

Safe Harbors Implementation Report

Sola Plumacher provided an overview and progress report on the Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Safe Harbors I was first put in place about ten years ago. There were many challenges to its functionality, and over the past year our CoC has migrated to a new platform - Safe Harbors II. Overall, Safe Harbors is an essential tool in our efforts to end homelessness, and is intended to provide information that will allow our region to:

1. Coordinate systems and client information to deliver the housing and support services needed among people who are (or were) homeless;
2. Understand the existing homeless services system and the needs of homeless people;
3. Measure our progress in ending homelessness.

Safe Harbors currently collects data from 161 programs, increasing to approximately 240 programs by the end of 2009. Current programs using the system include the majority of the 8,400+ emergency and transitional beds operated throughout King County. By the end of the year it will also include permanent supportive housing beds as well as outreach and prevention services as required by federal, state and local funding sources.

HMIS systems have increasingly become an important part of the McKinney-Vento application, and regions gain or lose a substantial number of points depending on how well their local HMIS is functioning. HMIS items scored in the McKinney application, *and where we stand*, are:

- Program coverage - must be above 86% for Emergency, Transitional, Permanent Supportive Housing and Safe Havens to gain full points. *We meet the goal for emergency and transitional housing, but fall far short for permanent supportive housing. These programs will be enrolled by the end of 2009.*
- Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) participation - not required but 2 points awarded if participating. We did not participate this year, but plan to next year.
- Unduplicated client records - percentage missing universal data elements and percentage where values are "don't know" or "refused". Acceptable rate per HUD is 20%. *Ours is in the 60-70% range for some data elements.*
- Use of HMIS for Point in Time count-sheltered and unsheltered. *We have not used the system for this purpose in 2009, but will in 2010.*
- Use of HMIS for performance assessment. *We need more and better data quality if we are to evaluate program performance or use data to drive policy within the CoC..*
- Use of HMIS for program management i.e case planning, scheduling, grants management. *The new platform (Safe Harbors II) contains these features.*
- Integration of HMIS with mainstream systems-jail, healthcare, DSHS, etc. *We do not currently have these capabilities, and it will be challenging to do so in the near future.*

To help us meet these standards, Safe Harbors staff has a comprehensive plan to improve use of Safe Harbors, including contractual requirements for use of the system coupled with fixes to the new system. The latest generation of Safe Harbors is more user-friendly and emphasizes a case management approach over simple data collection. Biggest challenges continue to be:

- Data Integration – because some of the larger agencies download data from their own systems, there are certain fields that don't match, information is not real-time, which doesn't support shared case management functions and it's difficult to de-duplicate clients.
- Data Quality – there are high error rates in completeness and quality (accuracy) of data. Too many records have "don't know" or "refused" which compromises data analysis.
- Legacy of Safe Harbors I – There were difficulties with the first generation of Safe Harbors and people continue to be distrustful of the new system. Safe Harbors staff plan to provide continued training and support to agencies to help them understand the benefits of the new system and how to enter data to support a robust system.

Break Out Sessions

IAC members self-selected break out sessions in order to have in-depth conversations on issues that will be critical in the coming year. Members attended three sessions in a rotation model. Themes from each session are noted below.

McKinney-Vento Funding

Themes:

- Our community needs to be (and is) committed to increasing our McKinney score. This will mean making some hard decisions about which programs are funded based on performance and funding priorities. Funders should establish a rubric for making these decisions and vet them with the IAC so that the community can support the hard decisions when the time comes.
- Strategies about McKinney-Vento funding should be made in the context of the overall funding picture, including the Coordinated NOFA and Funders Group decisions.

Capital Production

Themes:

- We are on target for unit production among chronically homeless single adults. We are lagging in production for those needing low level services and youth/young adults. Towards that end, we should explore whether it's possible to convert workforce housing studios that are under-utilized to homeless units without services.
- Emphasize/support graduation projects to free up units in high service buildings.
- Continue to explore more cost effective housing models that might lower construction costs.
- Provide more technical assistance to other regions (eg, South King County) to help them apply for/promote the development of capital units in their region and better distribute unit production.
- The overall pipeline/continuum of housing and services can be made more efficient by getting the right people into the right units with the right level of services.
- IAC members would like to see the production report more frequently, and have it broken out by region (North, East and South King County and Seattle.)

Use of Existing Housing

Themes:

- Be mindful of the service needs among people moving into existing housing. While they may have lower service needs, they are still likely to have some.
- Provide funding and service models that allow lower-service need clients to connect with case managers on an occasional basis. While they may not need frequent services, opportunities to touch base with a case manager can be a cost-effective solution to keeping them in their housing when and if problems do arise.
- Explore developing 'core competencies' to assess when people are ready to graduate from high needs housing to basic affordable housing. These assessments can direct case management plans as well as establish more objective standards for when services should be phased out.
- Explore the model of micro-business loans as a means to help people move out of / avoid homelessness. People may need short term loans to stabilize their housing situation, but they may also be able (and usually willing) to repay into a fund that they know will help someone else gain the same opportunities given to them during their time of need.

Coordinate Entry for Single Adults

Themes:

- This item is critical for efficiency of the entire system by getting the right people into the right units with the right level of services.
- It should include the full spectrum of services typically accessed by single adults – vets, mental health, chemical dependency, medical, homeless, others (while ensuring it is HIPAA compliant.)
- It should include the use of a streamlined (yet comprehensive) assessment tool. It needs to touch both high utilizer as well as highly vulnerable adults who may not be connected to high cost services.

Coordinate Entry for Families

Themes:

- Use Safe Harbors as a central data point for sharing information about families. This will facilitate the effective delivery of services among providers, and families have demonstrated a willingness to share data for the purpose of receiving services to stabilize their family.
- Recognize the impact of other systems and supports that may be available to families through complementary systems. Explore opportunities to coordinate / obtain data from multiple sources, including DSHS, SKIES, School Districts, etc.
- Establish defined point(s) of entry into the system, perhaps using regional hubs linked to the places "at-risk" and homeless families seeking help regularly go for assistance
- Develop standardized, strengths-based, culturally appropriate screening and assessment protocols and tools to be used by designated staff specifically trained in the intake process.

Safe Harbors / HMIS

Themes heard among the three break out discussion groups:

- All parties agree there is a need to increase the quality and integrity of the HMIS data (especially in light of the need to increase the McKinney score) and that the data can and should be use to help drive policy under the Ten-Year Plan.
- The legacy of Safe Harbors I continues to pose challenges, and we need to build trust in the new system. While the new system is an improvement over the old, there remain a number of use-ability issues to be resolved. It was agreed that partners in the system – both funders and providers – need to be forthright and accurate about issues with the system and be mutually accountable for submission of data and functionality of the software.
- Safe Harbors will provide regular training to new and existing users and designate specific staff people to answer questions so agencies have a "go to" person.
- If data integration is a problem, explore whether middle source software could scrub the data, allowing for more streamlined data integration / make the data sharing option more useable.
- All parties agree that use of Safe Harbors has the potential to dramatically improve the provision of coordinated services. Agencies can support the use of Safe Harbors by laying out clear expectations among staff on its use within their agency and stressing data quality. Safe Harbors staff can support the agencies' use of the system by ensuring the system is useable, streamlined and value added to agencies, case managers and clients.
- Recognize the cost impact of different funders requiring the use of different systems (DSHS requires agencies to use their system, local homeless housing/services funders require the use of Safe Harbors) requiring duplicate data entry.

Funding Principles and Priorities

The Funders Group has recently drafted a set of funding principles to guide priorities under the Coordinated Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and other fund sources they administer. The principles include strategies for setting priorities, how decisions will be made for both renewals and reapplications and a commitment to the use of data to guide efficiency/effectiveness of programs. A copy of the principles and the resulting priorities for this summer's NOFA were included in the Retreat packet, and the Funders Group sought the IAC's feedback to these documents.

IAC Feedback to Funders Group Principles and Priorities included:

- This level of transparency is good and even more transparency if/where appropriate would be better. Future NOFA's should be clear about the types of programs/services they want to fund so agencies can determine if it's worth applying or can tailor their response more appropriately.
- IAC members support the principle that decisions should be outcome driven. Towards that, Funders need to collect and share performance data so that agencies can know what is working, what the standards are, and how/where they can improve.
- Funders should share these principles/priorities with other jurisdictions to both motivate and reward those who are (or need to) align their own funding for supportive services and homeless programs.

- Funders need to make a conscious effort to connect to culturally focused agencies and provide technical assistance to help them be competitive in funding rounds.

Next Steps for CEH – Action Priorities for 2010 -2112

The group discussed strategies that would benefit from the attention of the IAC and larger community within the Committee to End Homelessness in the next year. Ideas included:

- Continue to focus on discharge planning and graduation.
- Restart prevention efforts and the conversation on shallow subsidies and tailored services.
- Include a focus on homelessness prevention among youth, with an emphasis on intervention among homeless youth and young adults to forestall their slide into chronic homelessness.
- Focus on systems issues, with IAC using its influence to enhance/change local systems and our response to homelessness issues across boundaries.
- Collect and distill the data associated with the Ten-Year Plan. Provide updates on units produced, who has been housed, how they are doing, which programs are working well. Use this data to build political will and inform programs on what is working so we can replicate success.
- Strengthen connections with the sub regional plans to both support their efforts and hold them accountable for engaging their local leaders in homeless solutions.
- Keep the Governing Board engaged. Focus their efforts on promoting the Ten-Year Plan and building political will, especially as we start on our fifth year during a time with competing demands.
- Re-energize data analysis and reporting to highlight what's working and replicate successes.
- Ensure the strategic use of federal stimulus funds to assure that funds are dedicated towards best use, aligned with existing funds and strategies and doesn't create cliffs (where funding suddenly ends within critical strategies when the stimulus funds run out.)
- Increase our McKinney score. The Funders Group, or other appropriate body, should draft a rubric with specific and transparent strategies for increasing the McKinney score. This should be brought to the IAC for their feedback/validation which would help assure that any difficult decisions that must be made are made with community support towards the greater good.

Updating the Ten-Year Plan

The IAC discussed whether the strategies under the Ten-Year Plan need to be updated and whether it is time to recalibrate the number of units called for under the plan. It was agreed that the main strategies: Prevention, Moving People Rapidly into Housing; Increasing Efficiencies; Building the Political Will and Measuring Results are the primary goals to pursue and don't need to be changed. It was also agreed that while we may not achieve the ultimate goal of 9,500 units given the current economy and other factors, it would be better to communicate the reasons behind that, and resources needed to achieve it, rather than reduce the goal. Within that context, members of the IAC made the following recommendations/comments:

- We are mostly on target to achieve unit production goals for chronically homeless single adults, and with that achievement it may be time to shift resources to other populations.
- Now is the time to take advantage of market conditions to acquire properties.
- Continue to explore alternative solutions that support stop-gap solutions such as car camping and shelter solutions.
- It is critical we continue with efforts to build the political will. As we enter our fifth year we face considerable challenges given funding constraints and new community priorities. Create a marketing strategy that provides a reality check on the Ten-Year Plan. Acknowledge that the recession is creating unanticipated challenges, and be clear about the constraints and the resources that will be needed to implement the plan, while also stressing that the need for housing and services is more pressing than ever. Use data to make the case, including:
 - Increases in the number of calls to CIL and other basic needs (Food banks, etc.)

- Trends in the economy (unemployment, TANF applications, etc.)
- Use information from the Seattle Homeless Needs Assessment to guide strategies as appropriate. Adrienne shared that the data is being compiled from the April 13th needs assessment. What they are learning from the people who responded to the survey includes:
 - Their history of homelessness is long and complex. The vast majority of respondents are men who meet the definition of chronically homeless, having been on the streets for years.
 - There are fewer veterans than anticipated.
 - Most respondents said they would accept a roommate if it meant getting off the streets.
 - Most said they had some form of income to contribute towards housing costs.
 - Most said they had some history of chemical dependency and/or mental health concerns.

It was agreed that this marketing plan will be a priority in the coming months.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Bruce