

DRAFT FOR REVIEW



College of Architecture and Planning
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Background study to provide next steps guidance on a regional approach to supporting and ending homelessness

Report produced for the Denver Region Council of Governments and the City and County Managers Association

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the complexities that cause and perpetuate homelessness, the Denver Metropolitan Region needs additional research to fully understand the varying challenges facing individuals and communities through the region. Graduate students in the Regional Growth & Equity course taught by Dr. Carrie Makarewicz in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Colorado Denver, in collaboration with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), explored the various ways municipalities are understanding and addressing this issue.

Throughout the fall semester, students used interviews, reports, and other information from several counties, cities, and other stakeholders to assess and understand the challenges, document current actions to address the issue, and identify gaps and needs in the Denver region in order to determine whether some form of regional coordination could better support local jurisdictions (cities and counties), and other organizations to implement more effective strategies to end homelessness. They also researched regional approaches to homelessness in other regions in the United States and abroad.

This **DRAFT** report is an initial effort to answer the above questions; it is not intended to be exhaustive of all the issues facing each jurisdiction in the Denver region. We hope it provides some actionable recommendations in different areas, in the short and long term, so that the region may better support people who are currently homeless and prevent more people from becoming homeless.

STUDY APPROACH

The data from this study draws on in-depth interviews from a team of individuals including graduate students in the Regional Growth & Equity course, an additional graduate research assistant, and the instructor of the course, Dr. Carrie Makarewicz. Participants in this study included City and County Managers from the Metro Denver region, several non-profit organizations, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Overall, the team conducted 30 interviews using a single detailed script that was adapted for each type of organization interviewed.

We collected data using semi-structured and open-ended interview questions that lasted from thirty minutes to more than two hours. On arrival, each interviewee was read an informed consent statement that included the purpose of this study, their right to opt out of recording or not answer a question at any time throughout the interview, and contact information for the study. General questions included: knowledge of people experiencing homelessness, current programs or strategies addressing homelessness in their respective area, and willingness to work regionally, among others (see Appendix for interview script).

We transcribed the interviews and several broad themes emerged: Current Actors, Data & Information, Funding, Health & Safety, Complexities of Homelessness, Housing Issues, Flexible

Regional Solutions, and Systems Change. These themes are present throughout our analysis and provide a guiding narrative of the existing efforts, gaps, and possible solutions.

We also conducted a literature review using reports, case studies, and best practices on homelessness and regional collaboration strategies.

HOMELESSNESS: CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

Through the interview process, we learned that there are various definitions of homelessness. When we asked interviewees to characterize homelessness in their communities, we often heard “it depends.” For instance, the HUD required Point in Time surveys only counts those who are experiencing “literal homelessness”, which means they do not have a roof over their head at the time of the count. Thus, an individual or family sleeping in their car would not be counted as homeless. This is in contrast to how Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) defines homelessness: an “individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate, night-time residence”, meaning:

(i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;

(ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or

(iii) Is exiting an institution where(s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution

(HUD, Homeless Definition

https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf)

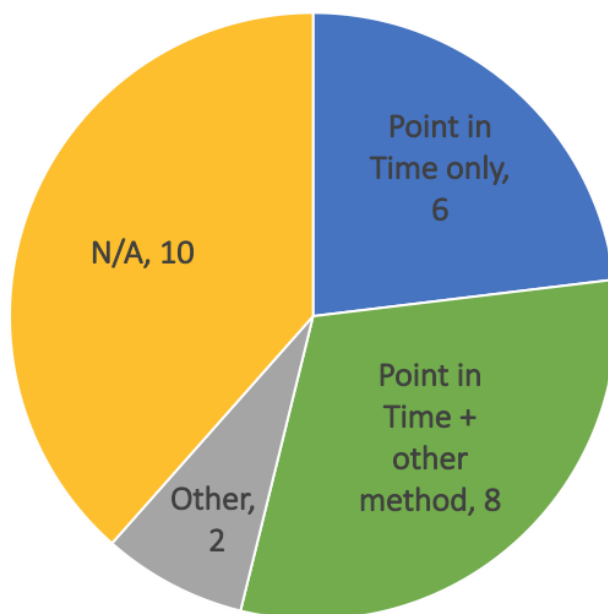
Many Cities and Counties that we interviewed are aware that the Point in Time (PIT) Survey misses the vast majority of those experiencing homelessness, including those living in short-term hotels, “couch surfing” with friends or relatives, or living in their cars. Other survey methods, such as the counts required by the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act reveal a much higher count of those experiencing homelessness. McKinney-Vento counts cover a wider range of people experiencing homelessness, because they include all who are unstably housed, including those temporarily “doubling-up” with friends or family, “couch-surfing”, or living in short-term housing. The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to do the count, so the number represents school aged children. Many of the municipalities we interviewed calculated larger numbers from the student population, assuming there is at least one parent per student. This calculation, however, doesn’t account for siblings that are also in the count, which may lead to

an over-estimate if each separate student is counted as a separate family. On the other hand, it may undercount, since it doesn't have a way to count adult children who are not in school, but still living with the family.

A common criticism from some interviewees that utilize the PIT count was that they know it is inaccurate because it does not capture the less visible homeless population (1,12). But while PIT might not be comprehensive, the MDHI notes that using a consistent approach each year provides baseline data so that numbers can be compared from year to year (21). For instance, this year, MDHI noticed a 400-500 person increase from previous years using the PIT (21). Although PIT may not be representative of the *absolute* number, MDHI notes the trend and magnitude of the number is valuable because of the consistent method used for the PIT each year.

Thus, because of the acknowledged issues with the PIT count, there are various methods of measurement around the region to quantify the homeless population. When we asked our interviewees how they measured the population experiencing homelessness within their jurisdiction or service areas, 10 respondents were unable to answer; seven of which were from non-profits or others not directly affiliated with a city or county, and three were from cities. Six respondents utilized the Point in Time (PIT) count, while eight others utilized the PIT plus another method, such as their own survey method or the McKinney-Vento (MV) count from their local school district, or the coordinated entry systems through MHD's HMIS, or self-coordinated system. Many interviewees noted they gathered information from their police departments (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Methods to Measure Homelessness in the Denver Metro Area by Jurisdiction



This chart shows the methods used by 26 of the interviewees at the time of analysis (N/A category includes both cities that do not measure their homeless population and nonprofits that do not have a specific service area or attempt to count the number of people who are experiencing homelessness).

One reason for the multiple methods is due to the different levels of understanding and resources available within each community, as well as community's stage in their approach to addressing homelessness. For instance, the City of Thorton developed the Community Connections Division in 2018 to address homeless and community needs, but due to its recent creation, the nature and extent of the issue is relatively unknown, despite a qualitative understanding of the population (11). Jefferson County has embarked on its own count, but the numbers were still being tallied at the time of our study.

Because of the many definitions of homelessness, the inconsistency in counts that represent each method leads to challenges in devising policies and programs. When municipalities have widely varying estimates of individuals experiencing homelessness, it is difficult to devise strategies that have the appropriate scale, resources, or approaches for different types of households or individuals, or their particular needs at each age. It is even more difficult since local governments have limited funds. Thus, the definition matters, since it may dictate how to study the causes, which population(s) to serve first, and which solutions to deploy.

Therefore, when asked how the region might collaborate to address homelessness, ***many of our interviewees emphasized the need to agree on a definition regionally and to identify an appropriate way to get an accurate count.***

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

Beyond counting the number of people who are experiencing different types of homelessness, we also asked interviewee's how their organization gained an understanding or knowledge of the issue. Many interviewees pointed out that seeing more people who are homeless is one way they and their citizens have gained a greater understanding of the prevalence and difficult situations of people who are homeless.

Cities and counties learn from anecdotes or stories that their colleagues share from direct contacts with people who are homeless. Direct contact with the homeless population is typically made by the police department, parks and recreation, libraries, and human services. According to the City Manager of Sheridan, up to 25% of the kids in the Sheridan School District are technically considered to be homeless, which is an incredibly significant number that is not always captured by other data collection methods. Others have learned from the nonprofit service providers and partners in their communities. Some have hired full or part time staff dedicated to the issue to build the knowledge and programs in house. For example, the jurisdictions in Jefferson County completed a "Comprehensive Homeless Count" that took place over the month of August and included surveys as well as interactions with individuals. A few stakeholders have hired outside experts to educate them on the issue and to study the issue in their communities in greater depth.

Through our interviews, however, we found a general lack of consistency in terms of the level of knowledge on the causes and extent of the issue, which reflects both the complexity of homelessness as well as the resources and efforts each community has devoted to studying, understanding, and addressing the issue. Homelessness, we realized from our interviews and other research, is not something one can fully understand without expert knowledge and good information, as we describe below.

Different Types of Homelessness and Locations

It is difficult to grasp the true extent of homelessness because of the different ways it presents itself through individuals' unique circumstances, and because it doesn't necessarily have boundaries. For instance, while several interviewees, especially those in suburban municipalities, noted that the people who were homeless in their communities were from their communities and wanted to stay near friends, family, and their children's school, others noted that some people who are homeless are mobile throughout the day, week or month. And that people travel in both directions depending on the time of day and availability of services, from Denver to other cities, and from other cities to Denver.

Sheridan, Englewood and Littleton have responded to these daytime movements of their homeless populations through the creation of the Tri-Cities group. This group formed to work together to create policies and programs to address homelessness. People may move around for several reasons, including safety, to be near others, activities, and services or to avoid the general public. Where people stay during the day and at night varies somewhat between the urban, suburban and rural places we interviewed. Yet, there was also a lot of commonality in responses across locations of where people reside, including on their friends' couches, in commercial districts, in parks, along rivers, in the foothills, motels, and hotels. Specifically, within Denver, people who are homeless have been noted to stay with friends and family, downtown, motels, parks, along the entire Platte River, and other waterways. While outside of Denver, in more suburban areas, the homeless have been noted to stay with friends and family, in commercial districts, cars, campgrounds, parks, waterways, greenbelts, motels and hotels.

Myths vs. Reality

Without a complete or accurate understanding of homelessness, people are susceptible to misconceived notions of the issue. Some of the interview responses did not align with research we conducted for this study. One of our sources was a study conducted in 2015 by The Denver Foundation to understand the myths and realities of homelessness. In a survey of residents about the reasons for homelessness, the top three reasons respondents listed were unemployment, substance abuse, and mental illness. However, according to the 2014 Point in Time survey, the top three actual reasons were lack of job or the inability to find work, the high costs of housing, and the breakup of a family (Denver Foundation, 2015). From our research, an often-cited misperception versus reality was regarding where people lived and who was homeless. Many respondents pointed to anecdotal and visible homelessness when describing the homeless issue in their communities. To that point, encampments, shelters and interactions with police were most often noted, and many perceived that most people who are homeless

are individuals, often single males. According the same Denver Foundation survey, however, 53% of the homeless population in the Denver metro region includes families with children (Denver Foundation, 2015). This finding is consistent with interviews that referenced both the PIT and McKinney-Vento survey and the differences in the counts because of the inclusion of unstably housed and less visible homeless families reported in the McKinney Vento survey.

Figure 2: Perspective on Homelessness Study: Myths versus Realities



PRELIMINARY TAKEAWAYS AND CHALLENGES

Our review of what people know and understand about the nature extent of homelessness in their communities revealed several challenges. First, because there are numerous definitions and methods for assessing the populations who are homeless, there is inconsistent data collection. These inconsistent methods of counting make it difficult for communities to allocate funding and staff to the issue. Additionally, the varying levels of knowledge about people who are homeless, the causes of homelessness, and the best ways to support people who are at risk of becoming, or already are homeless, further challenge communities to implement or support appropriate programs. While some communities and organizations are aware of the heterogeneity of the homeless population, including the causes, needs and solutions, while others have limited information leading to some misperceptions.

These findings suggest there is a need for a consensus, first on one overarching definition, and thus, a uniform measurement method that everyone agreed was as accurate and complete as possible. The region could then use this definition and the corresponding counts to define and direct its efforts. Without this uniform definition it would be difficult to confirm the scale, nature, and magnitude of the issue, from which funding, programs, and policies could be defined. Further, to design the best approaches that are suitable to each type of jurisdiction, there also is a need for a better qualitative information regarding the homeless population, including the different causes, consequences, and most effective solutions.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Much of our focus during the interviews was to collect information on the programmatic work currently underway in the jurisdictions we were able to interview by the time of this draft report.

The objective for this information was to consolidate the types and breadths of programs in order to categorize them into a snapshot of what is happening in the region. From this categorized and detailed list, we could identify opportunities for regional collaboration, where appropriate, to bolster and scale-up the work through coordination and cooperation initially, and ultimately collaboration on existing and new programs.

PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

From the interviews, we identified four broad categories that encompassed the various programs: 1) community education, 2) collaboration efforts, 3) direct services, and 4) connections to services. Each area is described below. The maps in Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate the geographies in which the various programs operate; they do not, however, imply that a specific jurisdiction is the entity completing the work since many of the program are run by nonprofit service providers.

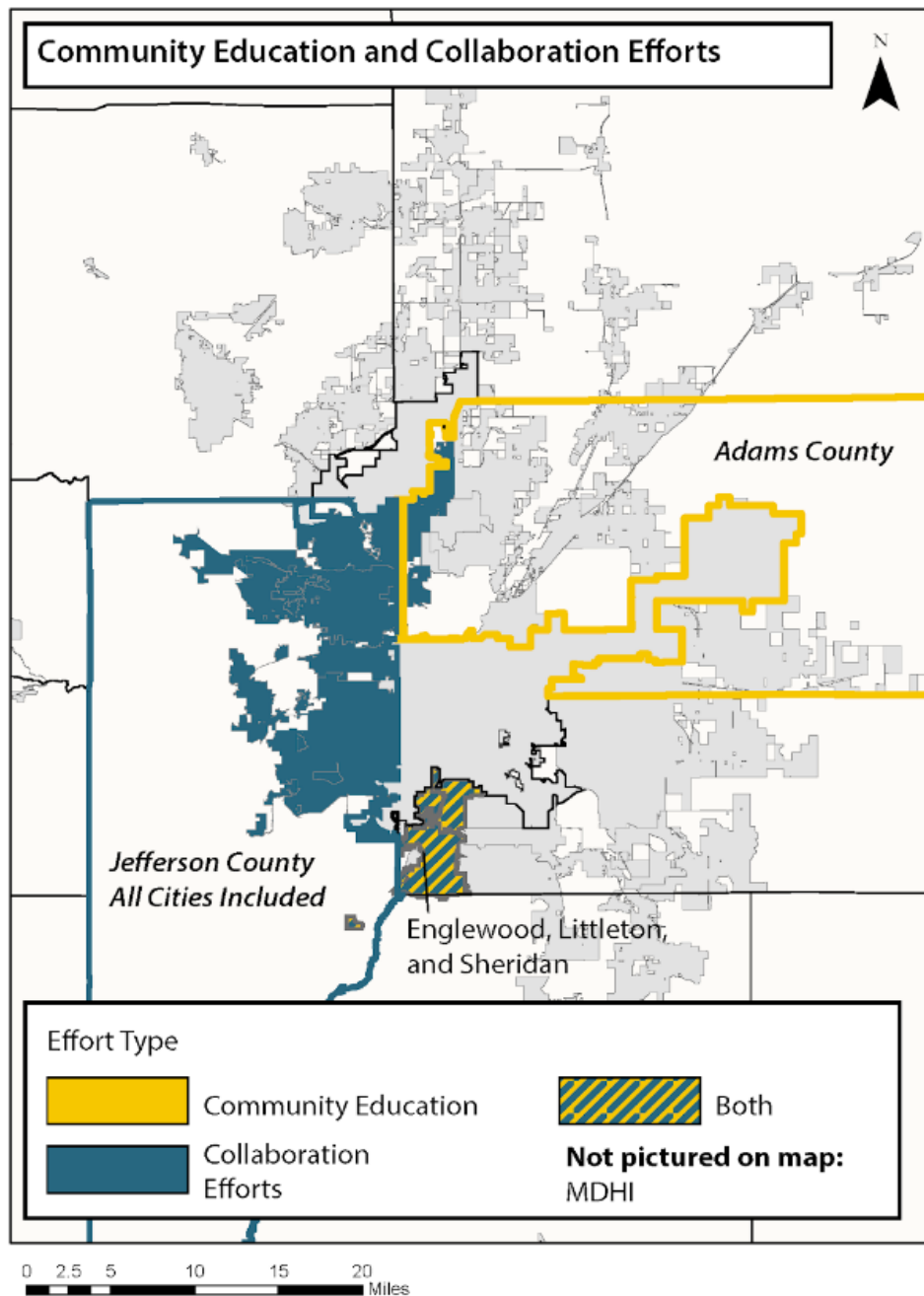
1) Community Education Programs

Community education programs focus on engaging with non-homeless populations, “the housed” members of a community, to address negative perceptions in the community about investing in programs and infrastructure to address homelessness, such as the construction of new shelters, providing supportive services programs, and other efforts. Programs in this category attempt to get the community involved in creating and furthering solutions. Based on the organizations interviewed, this category has the fewest existing programs and those that do exist have limited evaluation results. The only two existing programs from our interviews that are aimed at community education are Change the Trend’s Two Pathways and Adams County’s Harm Reduction Program.

2) Collaboration Efforts

Collaboration efforts currently underway provide hope for future collaboration at the regional level because, through these programs, municipalities and counties have formed, or are forming, partnerships to understand the extent and geographic scope of the issue. Four interviews identified collaboration efforts. Collaboration is occurring both between governments and non-profits and inter-jurisdictionally. Collaboration efforts provide a valuable means of sharing data, program ideas, funding, and staff capacity.

Figure 2: Geographies of Community Education and Collaboration Programs



Note that MDHI offers both types of programs throughout the region, but because they are regionwide they are not denoted on this map.

3) Direct Service Programs

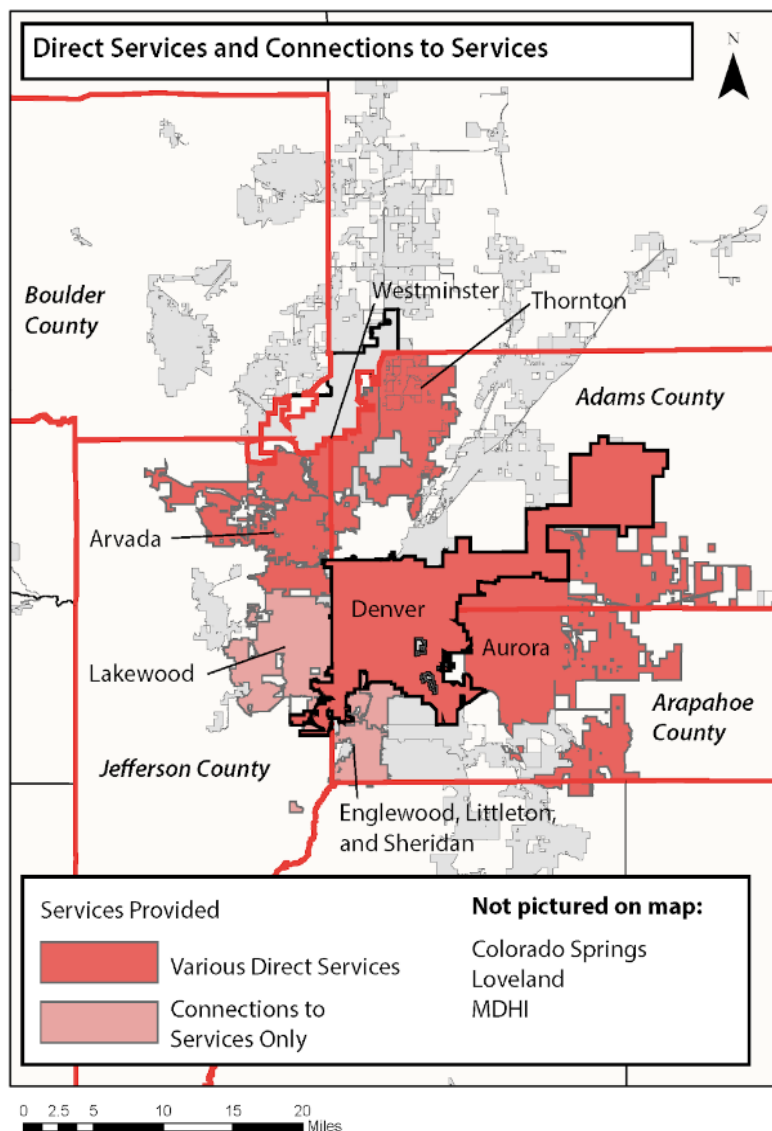
The provision of direct services includes offering shelter, clothing, hygiene products, showers, food, haircuts, housing placement assistance, employment opportunities, and other assistance. This category of direct services had the most existing programs and efforts - 55 percent of our 30 interviewees described this kind of work. Governments and organizations that provide these

types of services identified a need for additional funding and staff capacity to be more thorough in reaching the entire homeless population. They also wanted to be able to offer the services more often, since some of these services were only offered at events that happen annually or semi-annually.

4) Connection to Services Programs

Connection to services can range from brochures with information about various programs and services available, to staff that help people navigate services and the associated forms and application processes (Housing Dashboards, n.d.). As with direct services, the ability to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with services is largely limited by staff capacity.

Figure 3: Geographies of Direct Service and Coordination Programs



These program categories were identified through interviews conducted with individuals from municipal governments, county governments, and non-profit organizations. In Table 1, we show how the different program categories are distributed amongst these providers.

Table 1: Distribution of Services by Entity Type

	Municipal Government (9)	County Government (5)	Nonprofit (10)
Community Education	0	1	1
Collaboration Efforts	3	1	1
Direct Services	5	3	5
Connection to Services	5	2	3
TOTAL	13	7	10

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Six major challenges to creating, maintaining, and evaluating programs emerged through the interview analysis. These included funding limitations and barriers, mixed community response, lack of physical structures and administrative limitations to shelters, limited staff capacity, lack of quantitative data, and limited program evaluation mechanisms. All interviewees mentioned at least one of these challenges, most mentioned multiple. Each of these challenges is described in more detail below.

Funding Limitations and Barriers

As expected, funding presents a major challenge to many programs across all categories of service. In addition to simply not receiving enough funding to run programs the way the organizations and agencies would like to run them, some interviewees mentioned that many grants, especially federal grants, have requirements that restrict how they can structure their programs. In addition, grant funding is usually only available for a year or two before having to reapply. The process of identifying and applying for grants can be time consuming and, therefore, present its own barriers to securing funding due to limited staff capacity or expertise to apply for, and secure, enough grant funding.

Staff Capacity

One of the next largest challenges after funding limitations was staff capacity. Many municipalities mentioned the limitations they faced in upscaling programs due to an inability to dedicate full-time staff to them. This is a result of not having the staff capacity or the budget to dedicate staff resources.

Mixed Community Response

Four of the interviewees, especially non-profit organizations, commented on the challenges they face from the community when trying to expand homelessness programs and services. Not all community members have negative reactions to homelessness, but there is a general misperception among many jurisdictions' residents about the relationship between providing services and the number of people who might use them. In other words, if a community provides services, residents assume the services will attract more people who are homeless to their community. This negative response to services is addressed through programs that fit within the Community Education category. Community opposition is furthered by the next challenge of limited shelter options. There is often neighborhood pushback to the construction and operation of new shelters and any other services that concentrate homeless populations.

Lack of Shelter Options

Interviewees discussed the challenge of not having enough shelter space for the homeless population. Due to limited shelter space, those programs that direct individuals to services cannot serve the population to the fullest extent. This challenge is furthered by funding and staff limitations that make it difficult to construct and operate additional shelter spaces. There are also legal and administrative barriers that make some spaces unsuitable for shelters, even if the owner or operator of the building, such as a church, is willing to use it as a shelter. Another issue is the challenge of providing a shelter operator who has the capacity and skill to safely operate a shelter according to building codes, fire safety regulations, and health and human safety requirements, such as the prohibition of weapons and the separation by household or individual status, e.g. keeping singles separate from families with children.

Lack of Quantitative Data

Some interviewees called out directly a lack of quantitative data that could improve both local and regional programs by sharing ideas and information as well as allow for evaluation of existing programs. As noted in the prior section, data such as the Point in Time counts do not provide accurate enough information for municipalities to assess the needs of their homeless population; many municipalities do not have data on the types (i.e. vehicular, camps, etc.) and size of homeless populations that they are serving. Both government organizations and non-profits commented on the value that could be gained from having more efficient and consistent ways to collect, analyze, and share data. The University of Denver Burnes Center provides one avenue of addressing this challenge through their work with municipalities to better understand a community's homeless populations. This requires grant funding, however, and time to conduct a study to determine how to tailor a method to a community.

Lack of Program Evaluation

Nearly all programs discussed in the interviews were new programs, less than three years old. As a result of this program infancy and lack of data, very few are currently evaluating their programs, and those that are evaluating, or have plans to, are too nascent to have useful insights on their effectiveness in the long-term. More complete program evaluations would

enable those that are running programs to share ideas and for others to understand how and if it can be applied to their homeless populations.

IDEAS FOR REGIONAL RESPONSES

Of the above challenges, some have the potential to be successfully addressed at the regional level. If capacity were created at the regional level to help support the local efforts to reduce homelessness, this new resource could support the following next steps:

Fund Additional Staff Capacity

One of the most dominant challenges is lack of enough staff capacity to address the need. This challenge was noted for programs that offered direct service provision, navigation, collaboration, and outreach. Addressing this challenge could take the form of a regional coordinator or staff position that provided support to multiple jurisdictions, similar to the regional homeless coordinator position in Jefferson County. Another example of additional staff capacity is from Westminster where the city created a staff position through the Parks and Recreation Department which coordinates on homeless mitigation efforts with other jurisdictions as well with the business community. This fulltime position allows the staff person adequate time to study the issue, coordinate departments, and work with nonprofits providing services in the community, among other responsibilities. Additional staff capacity also could be addressed through regional funding allocated to additional staff working in counties and municipalities, e.g. by increasing existing staff time from informal partial time to dedicated part or full time focus on homelessness issues, or by funding an entirely new full time position. It's also worth noting the value of funding a position at a higher level so that the person has the ability to direct resources, meet as a peer with directors of other departments, manage staff, navigate complex funding programs, etc.

HMIS Utilization and Evaluation Tools

Most organizations interviewed were not able to ballpark the number of people served. Of those that were, there did not seem to be a method of tracking how many discrete participants they had, and how many were return participants served multiple times according to system data. Additional capacity for the integration of HMIS and OneHome, or the management of HMIS, will enable organizations to better assess how many people are benefitting from the services provided. As noted earlier, because most of the programs discussed in the interviews are relatively new, they do not yet have evaluation methods in place. A regional level evaluation would help to direct resources that increase the capacity of new and underfunded programs. These programs could then be part of a platform for comparison that would show the efficacy or weaknesses of various strategies.

Fund a Grant Researcher and Provide Technical Assistance

Most organizations received funding from the local level, with supplementary funding from federal programs and private funding. Still, many of the interviewees noted their programs did not have full funding to support their efforts. To fill this gap in Westminster, the fulltime person

hired for their dedicated manager-level position coordinates departments within the jurisdiction and local businesses, and they help service providers build their capacity through the identification of grants and how to apply for them. In order to assist municipalities that cannot support a full-time higher-level dedicated staff resource, a grant researcher or team of researchers could be employed at the regional level to provide technical assistance in identifying and applying for appropriate grants and how to find existing nonprofits that could expand services to their communities.

Community Outreach Toolkit

With limited resources, most organizations are focused on service provision, but several referenced community pushback as a major challenge. A regional entity could step into this gap and work on an education campaign at the regional level that also could be tailored to specific jurisdictions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Most programs are new and have not had the time to measure outcomes or find the balance of how to distribute thin resources across fulfilling their missions and measuring success. Two key reasons for the relative newness of so many programs are the limited timeline of most funding streams and the constant churn of political will of the jurisdictions in which they operate.

These constraints are the biggest argument for a supporting regional body that can offer both continuity and the types of supports we recommended above, including staffing, technical assistance, grant writing, and a community toolkit.

THOUGHTS ON WORKING REGIONALLY

WILLINGNESS TO WORK REGIONALLY

The goal of working or planning on the regional level is to ensure placement of land-uses infrastructures, and settlements across large areas of land as efficiently as possible. Working regionally can be beneficial to communities within a region, but it can also be as one more layer of bureaucracy to getting things done locally.

Generally, the interviews with city and county staff and officials, leaders of organizations, and those currently experiencing homelessness were supportive of the idea to increase regional coordination to address homelessness. However, not all who agreed with the concept in theory gave a resounding “Yes”. Many wanted more details on how working regionally would take shape.

Those who were completely on board with a regional effort felt a regional approach would be better than anything already being done. This group believed there was room to grow their efforts outside of their jurisdiction and that sharing ideas or creating collaborative projects would help to move the work forward more quickly than if they were to continue to try to do it on their own.

Of those municipalities and counties that hesitantly supported collaboration, they believed collaboration “would help to catalyze action,” but felt the task of program implementation and population evaluation was best done at the local level. These local governments want a specific two-tier regional structure or format, but do not want it to be binding, duplicative, or overly bureaucratic or uniform. They want clear goals and direction so that the effort enhances and supplements their activities and does not waste their time.

A third group of municipalities and counties were more on the fence about working regionally. To some, it seems like a double-edged sword. As one interviewee noted: “...it is absolutely necessary in that homelessness knows no boundaries, but regional collaboration takes a long time, as well as can serve as a barrier to movement”. They further explained that too much focus on how to collaborate can distract or stray from actually solving the problem because it takes so much effort when so many are involved.

At the same time, none of the interviewees responded “No” to working regionally. Therefore, our next step was to determine how and to what extent the different interviewees might want to work together. Should they compile their data and share resources? What kind of structure should they have, if any? Should participation be mandatory or voluntary? And where to start for policy alignment? These are key considerations to decide before any kind of regional collaboration would begin.

AGREEMENT ON BASIC ELEMENTS

Generally, there were two areas on which the interviewees agreed. Those elements of regional collaboration included data sharing and best practice/resource sharing among participants. There were varying reasons why the interviewees felt that these would be integral elements to the creation of a successful and effective regional approach to homelessness. While not all interviewees directly voiced that sharing this information regionally would be helpful, the question of their thoughts on sharing this type of information was posed in most interviews and no one voiced their opposition to these two efforts.

Data Sharing

Interviewees expressed how important data can be and that they can envision how sharing data would be helpful for other municipalities or counties that are just starting to tackle the issue of homelessness in their communities. Others saw the positive aspects of sharing data in general, whether the jurisdiction was newer or more experienced with the issue.

At least one interviewee mentioned that the data they currently have access to is at the county level and they would be interested to see what the data looks like at a regional level.

For the two people we interviewed who are currently homeless, while they did not directly voice that they would like data sharing, it was clear that they need better access to a range of resources, but did not know how or where to access resources, or even what resources were available. From these interviews, data on the location and types of services available would be helpful, but currently there is not a streamlined approach for sharing data about available services among nonprofits or nonprofits and governments.

Best Practice/Resource Sharing

One interviewee suggested a summit or annual meeting where stakeholders could convene to share best practices and resources. Another interviewee proposed an online portal where organizations can share ideas and ask questions about best practices and approaches to dealing with the issue of homelessness.

VARYING THOUGHTS ON OTHER ELEMENTS

Despite agreement on some features of regional collaboration, organizations expressed differing viewpoints on other elements of a collaborative effort. These disagreements relate primarily to the structure of a potential collaborative, the importance of having everyone's buy-in, and the extent to which local policies need to align across jurisdictions so that local and regional policies, or local-local policies are not in conflict.

Structure

Among respondents, there were as many differing opinions on the ideal structure of an effort as there were voices. Differences appear to come down to whether the model should be highly formalized or rather a loose forum for sharing data and ideas. Some local governments expressed concern that a structured regional collaboration model could make the path to a solution more bureaucratic and create a program that is challenging to implement. One respondent equated collaboration with “herding cats,” highlighting the challenge of bringing together a large number of diverse organizations. These entities were instead interested in an informal approach that would encourage conversation and kickstart the creation of a regional plan while still allowing communities to conduct their own programs. Early-stage relationship-building—prior to any formal structure—was a key mandate among organizations with this mindset.

Others, however, blamed the informality of current efforts for their failure to reign in the problem of homelessness, citing the extended waiting periods experienced while attempting to implement local intergovernmental programs. These municipalities proposed a stronger, more-organized effort that follows a top-down approach; they ultimately feared that informal collaboration would result in “a few brown-bag lunches and not much else”. In other words, jurisdictions’ staff would gather to discuss issues, build excitement to address the problems, but then lack the dedicated resources or structure to implement the ideas discussed at the meeting (or brown-bag lunch).

Participation

Local governments and nonprofits also disagreed on the extent to which universal participation in a regional program is necessary. Many organizations discussed the geographic mobility of homelessness, which serves as an impetus for working regionally but also raises the concern that if one community provides services, this action will attract homeless populations from other jurisdictions. The result is that counties and municipalities that take voluntary action could bear the brunt of the region’s homeless population. By this reasoning, some communities expressed that universal buy-in is needed to avoid an excessive burden on communities that provide resources, while others become “free-riders”.

In contrast, requiring all local governments in the region to participate is unpopular among under-resourced organizations. One nonprofit strongly discouraged mandatory participation for nonprofits, citing a lack of staff and funding among small organizations. The potential need to attend additional meetings emerged as a deterrent for some government respondents, as well. These organizations expressed that staff time is already stretched thin and that an additional commitment would be an unwelcome burden.

Policy Alignment

A third split in opinion centers on whether policy should align across jurisdictions. The general theory is that consistent programs take advantage of best practices and data sharing, while individualized approaches are more likely to succeed within each community’s local context.

Some organizations expressed that policy alignment is a major purpose of collaboration and therefore should be a primary focus of the effort. This line of thinking follows the belief that region-wide implementation is necessary to the success of the program. Similar to the concern about free-riders, these respondents felt conflicting local policies, e.g. the presence or absence of camping bans, would result in unintended consequences, among other issues.

Other organizations, however, highlighted differences among regional communities as evidence that a single solution is unworkable. Since locations are diverse in geography, urban form, and culture, several organizations felt that tailored solutions are needed for each individual community. These entities tended to be put off by a Denver-centric approach and felt that a regional effort must respect the voices and needs of all communities, including urban, rural, and suburban.

The sum of these differences in opinion signals that additional research and discussion is needed to determine which features of a regional approach are likely to be effective and acceptable to a range of stakeholders.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: HOW SOME PROGRAMS MAY OR MAY NOT WORK REGIONALLY

The difficulty with serving the homeless through collaborating at a regional level is that every city (and county) is different. One size fits all solutions are viewed with skepticism. For example, people noted the differences between combined city and county locales, such as Denver and Broomfield, and those that were separate. In the combined situations, the city can't argue that serving the homeless is a county function. The city and county share responsibility for serving the homeless in their contiguous boundaries. Another difference is location and size of communities. Because of its location and size, Denver experiences the largest population of homeless in the entire region and they also have the most services for people experiencing homelessness. This has allowed them to have access to more financing tools, such as Social Impact Bonds. This type of strategy might not be possible for smaller communities, or at the regional level.

On the other hand, Aurora has dedicated two percent of their sales tax revenue on retail marijuana to pay for services and support for their homeless residents. This could be a strategy that works for other communities more readily than the complex Social Impact Bond program. But not every city (or county) allows retail marijuana sales in their jurisdiction and therefore this source could not be mandated regionally.

In Jefferson County, several cities have voluntarily come together to fund navigator positions to help direct homeless to services available in their area. The problem is that a few of the smaller cities have now decided they can't afford their share of the support and have pulled out of the coalition. They then point to the county and argue that the county should be paying for these types of efforts.

Adams County offers another lesson. The county planned a program to help people who are living along the Platt River by hiring them to remove the infestation of Russian Olive trees. The county would work with a workforce and training agency to hire men and women experiencing homelessness to work along the river and remove the invasive species. This innovative program would solve two local issues at once, giving the homeless a job and removing the trees along the river. The program is currently stalled, however, as the county finds additional funding to pay the workers a higher wage. This was a stipulation of the county commissioners.

Cities like Englewood and Sheridan are struggling to deal with homeless people in their communities who have set up camps along the river. These communities are small, modest communities built out during the post-war housing boom with the 1950s and, thus, they don't have the fiscal resources of their larger and wealthier neighboring cities. They are impacted, however, when cities like Denver begin to enforce camping bans along the river in Denver, which pushes the homeless further south into Englewood. Englewood then feels forced to implement similar policies as a reaction to Denver's actions.

One thing is certain: homeless issues have grown to the point that every city and county in the Denver metro area has people who are not stably housed. Fifteen years ago, most city and county managers probably did not need to view homelessness as a top priority. Today, most agreed that homelessness is one of their top local problems, not just a "Denver problem", and that they felt ill-equipped to solve it.

BEST PRACTICES: REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS

In this section we highlight efforts from regional level efforts to address homelessness in five places:

- Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
- King County, Washington, U.S.
- San Diego County, CA, U.S.
- Los Angeles County, CA U.S.
- Glasgow, Scotland

GREATER VICTORIA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS, VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (the Coalition) was formed in 2008 with a mission to end homelessness in their region. The Coalition was ignited when Mayor Alan Lowe tasked a 120-day task force to recommend a service model and business plan that would provide better assistance to residents challenged with mental illness, addictions and homelessness¹. The Mayor's Task Force was charged with breaking down the issue of homelessness in Victoria and developing a new service delivery model that would be a substantial shift in the way practitioners respond to their community's social and health challenges. As a result of this thorough work, local stakeholders rallied and the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society was created.

Since inception, the Coalition has challenged the status quo by questioning stigmas around homelessness and it continues to provide data-driven reports that paint an accurate picture of what homelessness looks like. It also emphasizes that homelessness is an economic issue, not a character flaw. In support of ending homelessness, the Coalition stands by its housing first model, creating over 2,000 long-term rental units². In addition to housing, the coalition provides a hefty menu of services to ensure residents maintain housing for years to come. The Coalition has maintained its robust services in part through the regional governmental structure. The core of the Regional Housing First Program (RHFP) is \$90 million invested equally by the national government (Canada), the province, British Columbia, and the Capital Regional District³.

¹ victoriahomelessness.ca

² <https://victoriahomelessness.ca/homelessness-101/regional-housing-first-program/>

³ https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/crd-document-library/committeedocuments/financeandcorporateservicescommittee/20100203/2010-02-03---item-06-greater-victoria-coalition-to-end-homelessness-funding-increase-requestR.pdf?sfvrsn=f6a0552d_0

The coalition notes that the challenges of funding are widely understood, and that their portfolio of 2,000 housing units did not happen without political will and forceful advocacy and collaboration. There are also many services the Coalition provides that could save time and resources for the Metro Denver area. In turn, those saved resources could go towards housing. For example, the Coalition provides information and resources for people experiencing homelessness, practitioners, city officials, and others in the coalition through a highly regarded website⁴.

The website contains updated lists of places to get a hot meal and food banks that help offset food budgets. The Street Survival Guide, a guide that is digital and can be made into a pamphlet, is full of additional useful resources. This guide is a timesaver for nonprofits as well - so they can spend time connecting with people, not spending resources trying to reinvent (or find) the wheel(s). Below is an image of resources that are in the guide.

Figure 4. The Coalition's Street Survival Guide snapshot

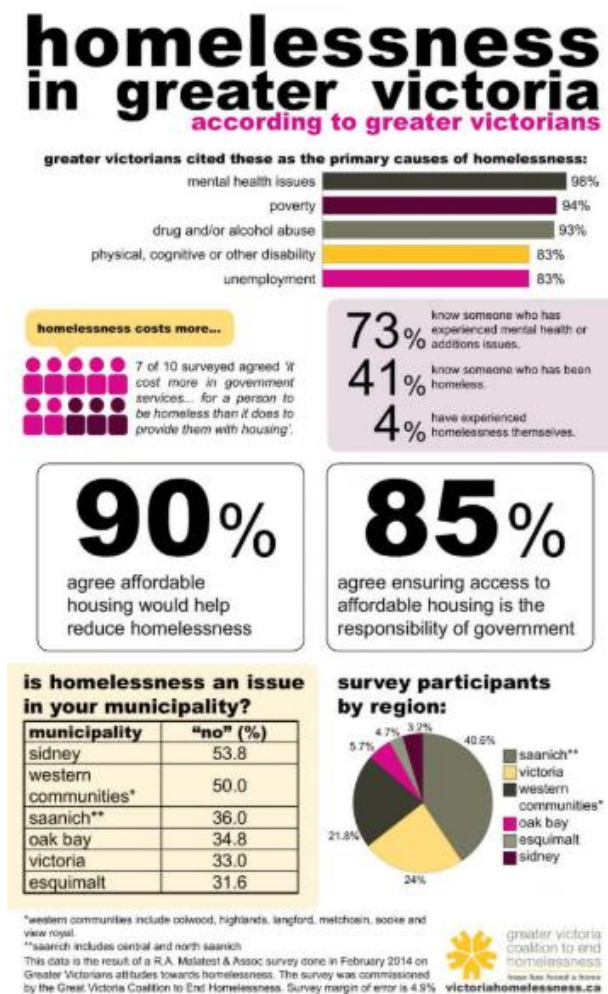


⁴ <https://victoriahomelessness.ca/>

For practitioners

Under the resources tab, there are toolboxes with quality-designed infographics that provide high-level information, a resource and outreach catalog with best practices for engagement and language protocols, a report on achievements, and guides for every program and demographic in the region. There is also a “Homelessness 101” tab⁵ with information to keep practitioners organized and cohesive. It has several pertinent documents for the profession, including proposal forms, deadlines, and applications. This includes the Regional Housing First Program, Coordinated Access and Assessment, and Reaching Home. In addition, there are best practices for levels of prevention and types of prevention.

Figure 5. Infographic of the perceptions of homelessness in the Greater Victoria region



(This snapshot is one of many housed in the Resources toolbox)

⁵ <https://victoriahomelessness.ca/homelessness-101/>

For the General Community

The “Get Involved” tab⁶ is all about the community taking charge and giving back. This includes volunteering opportunities, donating, youth programs, peer housing support programs, a speakers’ bureau, stakeholder tables, and employment. The website is a one-stop shop for everything on homelessness in the region.

The Coalition appears to have excellent web and social media presences with a consistent and transparent message of their mission. The Coalition also has 36 publications that support topics from strategic planning to general resources. All publications can be found at <https://issuu.com/victoriahomelessness>.

Some of the topics and titles of their publications include:

- Street Survival Guide
- Facing Homelessness – Report on Housing and Supports
- Homeless Partnering Strategy, Community Plan
- Patterns of Homelessness in Greater Victoria
- Homelessness Research Plan
- Cycle of Impossibility: Pathways into and out of Family Homelessness
- Youth at Risk of Homelessness Identification and Action
- Youth Pathways In and Out of Homelessness
- Creating Homes, Enhancing Communities

Lessons for the Denver Metro Region

Based on our research on both the Victoria Coalition and the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) and its challenges, there are aspects of the Victoria regional collaboration that could be replicated in Metro Denver. The Coalition is similar to MDHI in regards to partnership members - local service providers, nonprofit organizations, businesses, local governments, and the faith community – each contributing its strengths, expertise and resources, as necessary, for the housing and support projects of the Coalition. A difference however, is a more robust website. A website of the Greater Victoria caliber could combat one of the most significant challenges noted in our Denver Region homelessness interviews – a one stop shop for information resources, for the public, local governments, nonprofits, and people experiencing homelessness.

⁶ <https://victoriahomelessness.ca/get-involved/>

KING COUNTY, WA REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS AUTHORITY

Overview

The King County Regional Homelessness Authority (“Authority”) was established in September 2019. It is an independent legal entity, a public corporation, chartered to coordinate services for people experiencing homelessness. The Authority recently launched a new website: <https://regionalhomelessnessystem.org/>.

The mission of the Authority is to “**oversee policy, funding, and services for people experiencing homelessness countywide.**” The enabling legislation included a proposed “Interlocal Agreement (ILA) and a Charter” to authorize the creation of the Authority and to administer and oversee regional homelessness efforts.

The Authority focuses on an **evidence-based approach** to homelessness solutions. For example, in 2018, the King County Auditor’s Office produced a report that found that “the governance structure of the homeless response system is too weak to drive change.” Recent reports and collaborative efforts such as “[One Table](#)” and the “[Regional Affordable Housing Task Force](#)” have also pointed to the fractured nature of homeless services in King County and the need for the unification of efforts. These reports led to the eventual establishment of the Authority and helped shape the initial mission, programs, and services.

Governance

The Authority is governed by a Steering Committee, Governing Board, and Advisory Committees. The following is from their website:

- “The eleven-member Governing Board provide guidance, management, and oversight to the Authority. Three members must have lived experience of homelessness. The King County Executive, King County Council, Seattle Mayor, and Seattle City Council each appoint two members.
- The Steering Committee includes the King County Executive and Councilmember, Seattle Mayor and City Councilmember, up to two Sound Cities Association members, and two people with lived experience of homelessness.
- The Advisory committee members include individuals with experience related to preventing and ending homelessness.
- An Executive Director lead the Regional Authority.
- There will be a creation of a new Ombuds Office to serve as a single point of contact for people receiving housing services to resolve issues with conditions and programming. As patterns emerge, the Ombuds will suggest changes to policies and contracts to improve the system.”

Services

The Authority will provide **unification and coordination** of the homelessness response system for Seattle and King County. The Authority will start by reviewing existing services and programs provided by the City and County and work to coordinate outreach, diversion, shelter, rapid rehousing, prevention efforts, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing services.

The Authority will also assume oversight of shelters currently contracted with the City of Seattle and King County.

Funding

King County will dedicate about \$55 million in service and administrative funding and \$1.8 million to support the start-up of the Authority. The City of Seattle will dedicate approximately \$73 million for services and administrative funding, and \$2 million for start-up costs. Funding will go through the normal budget process of the respective County and City Councils.

Lessons for the Denver Metro Region

King County/Seattle did not develop the Authority or a regional homelessness strategy until they had a baseline assessment of the local and regional issues around homelessness. This helped garner public and political support for a regional homelessness solution because they understood how to leverage their resources, coordinate programs, and unify solutions.

A first step for DRCOG would be to perform its own audit/baseline assessment to determine what planning and regional interventions would be successful given the homelessness context in the Denver Metro region. Without understanding the baseline, and how homelessness impacts the Denver Metro area in a regional way, it is difficult to determine the leverage points in the system that will have the most impact and provide holistic solutions.

SAN DIEGO REGIONAL TASK FORCE ON THE HOMELESS

Structure

The San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH) is a membership-based nonprofit and is designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a Continuum of Care provider. It provides services throughout San Diego County in California and is funded through contracts, contributions, service point annual support fees, membership fees, and grants. Its members consist of both individuals and representatives of organizations. Examples include the San Diego Workforce Partnership, two different public housing authorities, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, homeless service providers, homeless or formerly homeless individuals, and representatives from education, law enforcement, healthcare, businesses, and the faith community. All members are represented on a Board of

Directors. The Board of Directors guides the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who lead the RTFH's staff. This staff includes a Chief Operating Officer and administrative support. The administrative staff runs the programs and services the RTFH implements. This structure ensures that a variety of different stakeholders from across the county can make their voices heard and influence how the RTFH addresses homelessness in the region.

Figure 6: San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH) Organizational Structure



(Based on an organizational chart and other information found in San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless, n.d.-b)

Programs and Services

The three main programs or services the RTFH runs are listed below.

1. Continuum of Care (CoC)
2. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
3. Coordinated Entry System (CES)

Other services include the provision of funding and a Point-in-Time Count.

Continuum of Care

As the RTFH San Diego Continuum of Care, there are specific standards and monitoring procedures the organization must adhere to in order to administer federal grants. These include standards for recordkeeping and monitoring and seeking HUD approval before

significantly altering projects. Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) is the designated Continuum of Care provider in the Denver metro region.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

San Diego's Continuum of Care uses the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to keep track of and report on use, performance, and outcomes of services at the project and system levels. HMIS is only accessible to participating organizations, though there are published reports that are available for the public. This information can inform RTFH on the effectiveness of their programs and services. Metro Denver Homeless Initiative also uses HMIS.

Coordinated Entry (CES)

The third main program the RTFH implements as a Continuum of Care provider is the Coordinated Entry System (CES), which is mandated by HUD. CES connects eligible individuals and families experiencing homelessness to available housing. The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) is used to prioritize the provision of housing to those most in need. This is also similar to Metro Denver's Homeless Initiative.

Point-in-Time Count

There is another program RTFH implements to collect data on homelessness in the region. The organization holds an annual Point-in-Time Count called "We All Count" which determines the number of people spending the night in a place that is considered unsheltered. This is a one-day survey. During the 2020 We All Count they will use the Counting Us App. This is another program that is also implemented by Metro Denver's Homeless Initiative.

Funding

RTFH also supplies funding to homeless service providers. In 2018, RTFH started distributing grant funding from the State of California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council and the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency. This is a 2-year funding source called Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP). MDHI also has a program that distributes funding to homeless service providers.

Lessons for the Denver Metro Region

Many of the valuable programs that RTFH implements are also implemented by Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, largely because both are designated Continuum of Care providers by HUD. As such, it would be beneficial for any new or expanded regional approach to addressing homelessness in the Denver metro area to support and coordinate with MDHI. Another aspect of RTFH that the Denver metro area can learn from is the organization's structure. The structure of RTFH emphasizes the need to include a variety of different stakeholders, including people who have first-hand experience being homeless, in the decision-making process. An expanded regional effort in the Denver metro area could do something similar.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOMELESS INITIATIVE

Overview

In August of 2015, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative (the Homeless Initiative) following extraordinary increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness across the Los Angeles region. In 2016, the Homeless Initiative released an action plan detailing almost 50 strategies, divided into six areas, for combatting homelessness across the county. These areas include:

- Prevent Homelessness
- Subsidize Housing
- Increase Income
- Provide Case Management and Services
- Create a Coordinated System
- Increase Affordable/Homeless Housing

To read the full text of Los Angeles's action plan, *Approved Strategies to Combat Homelessness*, visit <https://homeless.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/HI-Report-Approved2.pdf>.

In 2017, L.A. County residents passed Measure H, a one-quarter percent sales tax increase for ten years to aid in funding L.A.'s strategies to combat homelessness. Measure H is estimated to net around \$355 million per year for these efforts.

Governance & Structure of Collaboration

As an initiative of the Board of Supervisors, the Homeless Initiative is run through L.A. County. The Homeless Initiative's primary role is to allocate funding in furtherance of completing their action plan. Due to the scale at which the Homeless Initiative allocates funding however, additional oversight is provided by Citizen's Oversight Advisory Board. This board reviews Measure H expenditures to ensure accountability.

Most of the funding is allocated on a regional level by strategy. L.A.'s Service Planning Areas (SPAs) receive funding for each of their outlined strategies from a specified LA County agency, such as the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority (L.A.'s Continuum of Care).

In addition to this structure, the Homeless Initiative also partners with United Way of Greater Los Angeles' Home For Good Funders Collaborative to fund the creation and implementation of actionable city homelessness plans across L.A. County. As of August 2018, 40 cities had created homelessness plans.

Lessons for the Denver Metro Region

The County of Los Angeles has an advantage due to its sheer size. Multiple councils of government fall within the county. Only one board of supervisors and one voter group was needed to approve an action plan and a sales tax increase to combat homelessness at a regional scale. With nine counties, the comparison of the Denver Region to L.A. County seems like a comparison of apples to oranges. However, L.A. County succeeded in creating an action plan and aligning all measures thereafter with that plan. The creation of a list of region-wide strategies to combat homelessness, that all governments look towards for shaping their individual efforts, would both enhance coordination and create better alignment of homelessness efforts regionally.

CENTRE FOR HOMELESSNESS IMPACT, GLASGOW, SCOTLAND

The Centre for Homelessness Impact was created by Crisis and Glasgow Homeless Network as a result of the [Ending Homelessness Faster By Focusing On 'What Works'⁷](#) feasibility study. Essential to this think tank and nonprofit, is that the entity acts as a data hub for likeminded homelessness organizations to find quality and reliable information to combat homelessness. This organization program was launched in 2017 and has since grown to be self-sustaining. While this organization does not directly combat homelessness, it instead acts as a hub of resources for nonprofits in the industry to find quality information and potentially collaborate.

The website of this organization has helpful videos that illustrates the concepts of the following programs and tools.

Programs Framework⁸

The Centre's ideas are directed toward the goal of developing a society in which the experience of homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurrent. In order to reach this reality, the Centre operates under the concept of a SHARE Framework (Smart Policy, Housing System, All in it together, Relational, Ecosystem of service:

*“Design **Smart** policies and programs; Create a **housing system** that leaves no one behind; Make ending homelessness a **shared** priority; Connect **people** with **place** and **each other**; Grow a person-centered **ecosystem of services**;*”

The content was created to encourage policy makers, funders, and professionals to systematically frame their work towards ending homelessness. Figure 7 highlights the elements in the SHARE framework.

⁷ https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237356/ending_homelessness_faster_by_focusing_on_what_works_2017.pdf

⁸ https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/59f07e67422cdf0001904c14/5af4288fdebbda9d1a495a98_SHARE-framework_report_2018.pdf

Figure 7: Program Framework, Centre for Homelessness Impact

Smart policy Design smart policies and programmes	Evidence and Data Evidence and data influences and is designed into decision-making structures and processes Safe Policy Policy is safe and does no harm Value for Money Maximise the positive impact of resources available Integration and Collaboration Foster cross-sector collaboration with policies that support collaboration and create incentives and methods to encourage ongoing coordination	Relational Connect people with place and each other	Built Environment Designing cities and suburbs in ways that improve health and wellbeing Capabilities Every individual deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential (it's never too late) Social Capital and Networks Showing people they matter, give them a say, and enhance their social networks
Housing system Create a housing system that leaves no one behind	Ontological Security Homes provide constancy, stable spaces to live and do Wellbeing Homes are a gateway to wellbeing Supply and Access Housing supply matches demand and access is equitable	Ecosystem Grow a person-centred ecosystem of services	User Voice People experiencing homelessness are perceived as equal and active partners in the design and delivery of services (and never as as 'burdens on' or 'resistant to' services) Quality of Services Ensure that people have a positive experience of services and care Safe Environment Support, treat and care for people in a safe environment and protecting them from avoidable harm Joined-up services Policy initiatives to integrate health, housing and welfare services
All in it together Make ending homelessness a shared priority	Civic Engagement Citizens play a role in advocating and helping to make public and private institutions more transparent, accountable and effective, and contributing to more impactful solutions to tackle homelessness Public Understanding and Mindset The public believe that homelessness is a solvable social issue that smart government policies and practice can cure Education Educating the next generation about the nature of homelessness		

High-level summary of the 5 smart goals of the SHARE framework

Structure of Collaboration⁹

Understanding that homelessness is a diverse, expansive and complex issue, the Centre focused on gathering a “bird’s eye view” of the homelessness sector. Looking at the issue from this perspective allowed them to gain a better understanding of the bigger picture, as the following quote recognizes:

“homelessness will always be linked to housing, but also extends to schools, jobs, health care, family, and community life, and how housing equity is connected to opportunity and life chances”

⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/296290/obesity-map-full-hi-res.pdf

The Footnote⁴ includes an organizational chart of Obesity by industry and positive and negative indicators. It is recommended that DRCOG adds the additional step of include organizations in the region along with the stressors they most specifically address.

The Centre makes an argument that homelessness needs to be combated in a similar way the health industry in the UK is combating obesity. They note that the sustainability of the health care effort is from bringing together a wide depth and breadth of different industries with a common goal and purpose and that the same needs to happen to combat homelessness.

Essentially, the process would start by building a roadmap of indicators or stressors that are affecting a person's ability to access to stable housing. The approach would then be expanded to evaluate how the various indicators are related and where they potentially overlap. This process would conclude after identifying organizations in the region that are working in those specified areas. Once completed, DRCOG/MDHI would have a corresponding road map of all the programs related to homelessness, which stressors each addresses, and what overlap exists between agencies or organizations. By creating this roadmap, it would be possible for DRCOG to now make informed and strategic decisions when it comes to funding support and technical assistance requests.

This process and ideology go hand in hand with the purpose and goals of The Center, which is to help organizations make decisions based on data, facts, and best practices.

Tools

Intervention tool¹⁰

The goal for their data platform is to provide the:

"Most accessible and reliable entry- point to evidence on homelessness intervention."

Their data platform houses the analysis of a variety of homeless impact case studies. Once evaluated the studies are provided icons to let future readers know its value at a short glance based on reliability, cost effectiveness and the type of impact. It also includes detail on how the intervention works, what population is affected, and how it works.

Synthesizing existing knowledge (Evidence & Gap Map)¹¹

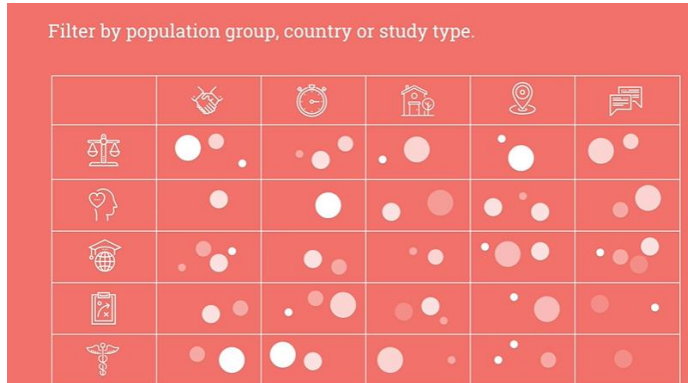
Similar to the process identified in the *Structure of Collaboration* section of this white paper, The Evidence and Gap maps, are designed to collect all the evidence, dates, and white papers related to particular stressors or indicators into one place and then to map the data where possible. The results show the end user what is known and not known about a particular indicator. Currently the Evidence map is looking at the impact of homelessness intervention

¹⁰ <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/gap-maps>

¹¹ <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/evidence-finder>

programs from around the world. The Gap Map is looking at how these interventions have been implemented. The following figure shows how the Evidence and Gap map synthesizes different types of issues and programs by place and indicator.

Figure 8: Evidence and Gap Mapping exercise



(Screen shot from the video explaining the Evidence and Gap mapping process.)

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Interview Consent and Script

Regional Homelessness Project | Regional Growth & Equity Fall 2019

(updated 9/11/19)

INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT

As Flo [or you] mentioned in the [email or phone call], I am a graduate student in the Urban and Regional Planning master's program at CU Denver. This semester I am taking a class called Regional Growth and Equity and we are working with DRCOG to identify the need for regional coordination around the issue of homelessness. Through that process we are conducting interviews with several counties, municipalities, and other stakeholders to assess current work on the issue and what a regional coordination effort might entail in order to supplement or bring together strategies from different organizations and communities.

This interview will take up to one hour depending on the information you have. I am taking notes to share with my class, but no one outside of class will have access to them. We are, however, using the notes from our interviews to write a formal report that we will present to DRCOG and the City and County Managers association. If you wish all or some of your answers to remain confidential, anonymous, or off-the-record, please let me know as we go through the questions. We would like to share the name of your organization in association with the programs you describe, but we can keep your other comments anonymous as you prefer.

[If needed: In case they ask for the difference between anonymous, confidential and off-the record:

- Off-the record: we will use the comment to further our knowledge but will not quote the comment on the source of the knowledge in the report.
- Anonymous: we will not list their name in our class notes or report or attribute any of the specific information to them, but we may quote them anonymously. Only the interviewer will know their name.
- Confidential: their answers won't be associated with their name and/or organization anywhere publicly, but we will use their name with the associated notes for our in-class discussions.

ASK: Is it ok if I record our conversation to help with my note taking?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#1. Can you describe what you know about people experiencing homelessness in your organization's [jurisdiction, service area, ...]? For instance, do you know the number of people and where they are living? How was this information gathered?

#2. What types of programs, policies, or other efforts have you implemented to address homelessness in [name of place or organization]?

#3. Can you describe some of the logistics for this/these program(s), such as the number of people working on them, percent of their time, and funding for the effort?

#4. Are you evaluating these programs or tracking some of the outcomes?

Prompt: [if not yet evaluated] are there plans to conduct an evaluation, or is it something you would like to do if, for instance, you had more staff time and money?

#5. Have you had any challenges with this/these program(s)?

#6. Are there other things you are planning to do or would like to do but haven't yet had the time or resources?

Now I want to move on to questions about exploring a regional informal or formal collaboration on similar or other types of efforts. There has been a discussion at the City and County Managers meetings about looking into coordinating efforts or at least creating a clearinghouse or informal collaboration to share ideas, approaches, etc., possibly through DRCOG

#7. Do you know of other organizations or jurisdictions working on similar or different programs to address homelessness?

Prompt: have you had any direct interaction with them, even just discussions about your similar efforts?

#8. Could you see the value of a regional collaboration or coordination effort to address homelessness?

#9. **IF YES** (if no, move to #11: What type of efforts would be useful to you and why?)

Prompt: would it be helpful to pursue grants together, or meet periodically to discuss strategies and outcomes?

Prompt: would you like to scale up your efforts so that your neighboring jurisdictions are doing similar things?

Prompt: would you be interested in working with nonprofits (governments, if they are a nonprofit) or just other governments (if they are a nonprofit)?

Volunteers of America, VA, Catholic charities-shelter in Ft Collins and Greeley, United way of Larimer county and Wells County

#10. If you had to design the effort, would you keep it informal, or make it more formal? For instance, should there be a steering committee, regular meetings, a website, a name, dedicated staff?

#11. **IF NOT INTERESTED:** What are some of the reasons you are **not** interested in a regional effort?

#12. Do you have any other ideas or thoughts on this topic that we haven't discussed?

Those are all my major questions, but I have a few wrap-up questions

#13. Can you think of anyone else we should interview or contact?

#14. Are you interested in seeing our final report? We plan to present our preliminary findings at the City and County Managers quarterly meeting on November 14th. We will use their feedback to finalize our report by the middle of December.

#15. As I look through my notes, if I have any questions, can I contact you for clarification? Do you prefer email or phone?

APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMS

The following is a link to a detailed list of the 36 programs discussed our interviews:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/39cygvvgkm1s828/MetroDenverHomelessnessPrograms_Fall2019.xlsx?dl=0

For each program, we provide the following information

Location
Program Name
Category
Service Provided
Age of Program
Funding Mechanism
Funding Amount
Funded Enough (Y/N)
Challenges Other Than Funding?
Number Served
Population Served
Geographic Scale
Evaluated (Y/N)

The spreadsheet includes the above detail for these 36 programs

Location	Program Name	Category
Change the Trend	Two Pathways	Connection to Services
Change the Trend	Two Pathways	Community Education
Arvada	CORE	Connection to Services
Arvada	Severe Weather Network	Direct Service
Aurora	Aurora@home	Direct Service
Lakewood	Citizen Action Team (CAT)	Connection to Services
Lakewood	Navigator	Connection to Services
Littleton	Tri-Cities meeting	Collaboration
Englewood, Sheridan, Littleton, Arapahoe Co.	Tri-Cities Homelessness Policy Group	Collaboration
Thornton	Magnet Event	Direct Service
Thornton	Resource Brochure	Connection to Services
Wheat Ridge	<i>General actions</i>	Connection to Services
Statewide (CHF)	<i>Magnet Event</i>	Other
Adams Co.	Poverty Reduction Team	Connection to Services
Adams Co.	Pathways to Prosperity	Direct Service
Adams Co.	Harm Reduction Program	Community Education
Arapahoe Co.	GOALS	Direct Service
Jefferson County	Homeless Navigators	Connection to Services
Jefferson County	Regional Coordination Model	Direct Service
Denver (Enterprise)	Social Impact Bond: Pay for Success	Direct Service

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Location	Program Name	Category
Gates Foundation	General actions	Other
Loveland	Continuum of Care	Direct Service
Metro Denver (MDHI)	Homeless Management Information System	Collaboration
Metro Denver (MDHI)	Continuum of Care	Direct Service
City wide	Social Integration	Other
Colorado Springs	The Place	Direct Service
Denver	Urban Peak	Direct Service
Westminster	City position focused on homelessness	Collaboration
Westminster		Direct Service
Westminster		Direct Service
Westminster		Direct Service
Boulder	Coordinated Entry Housing-focused Shelter PSH Rapid Rehousing Transitional Housing	Direct Service
Jefferson County	Regional Homeless Coordinator	Connection to Services
Jefferson County	Building Code Policy Updates	Direct Service
Jefferson County	Jefferson Prosperity Project	Direct Service
Jefferson County	Regional Coordination Model	Direct Service
Metro Denver	One Home	Connection to Services