



STATE OF WASHINGTON

State Advisory Council on Homelessness (SACH)

September 1, 2024

Honorable Members of the Washington State House of Representatives and
Honorable Members of the Washington State Senate,

Enclosed is the new 2024-2029 State of Washington Homeless Housing Strategic Plan drafted by the Washington State Department of Commerce. The State Strategic Plan provides a valuable roadmap for our state's investments to prevent and end homelessness and move households into safe, stable, affordable housing. The Legislature requires Commerce to develop this report through extensive stakeholder engagement, including the State Advisory Council on Homelessness (SACH), a Governor-appointed body created by executive order in 1994 to advise on homelessness issues. Additionally, Commerce reports annually on the progress of the goals and performance measures included in the State Strategic Plan.

As interim Chair of the State Advisory Council on Homelessness, I would like to offer some reflections from our Council on this current iteration of the State Strategic Plan. Representing a body of experts on homelessness from around the state, we feel compelled to offer a candid perspective on the current state of our homelessness response system.

1. Lack of Affordable Housing Remains the Primary Driver of Homelessness

The research is clear—the main reason people in our state experience homelessness is due to a lack of housing available to those making the lowest incomes. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a worker in Washington must earn \$40.32 an hour to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. This means that a person working at minimum wage at our state's highest rate (\$19.97/hour in Seattle) would have to work nearly 80 hours a week to afford an apartment for their family. Thousands of our neighbors are unstably housed and one emergency away from losing their housing. While other issues such as mental illness, substance use disorder, and domestic violence can exacerbate the problem and make it harder to find and maintain housing, basic economics are driving the problem. Our elders, on fixed Social Security-based incomes, are particularly vulnerable to rising rents. Their infrequent cost of living increases did not match the average 50% increase in rental costs our state has seen over the last decade.

To be clear, we sincerely appreciate the progress our state has made by increasing the investments in affordable housing preservation and construction. The steady increase in funding for the Housing Trust Fund and other crucial programs will help thousands of people find stability. We also encourage you to read the Affordable Housing Advisory Board's Housing Advisory Plan, which makes key recommendations on how our state can increase the development of housing affordable to everyone.

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2. Preventing Homelessness is a Key Strategy

Preventing people from losing their housing and better housing coordination for people leaving institutional settings is far less traumatic and costly than solely relying on our emergency response shelter system. The abundant federal rental assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic is drying up, and the state must evaluate how to ensure housing costs remain reasonable. We also want to lift up the tremendous successes of the Office of Homeless Youth in implementing prevention strategies, particularly for young people exiting foster care, the criminal legal system, or behavioral and mental health treatment. As the Yes to Yes report outlined, over the last 10 years, our state reduced youth homelessness by 40%. This should encourage us to continue to look upstream for all people experiencing homelessness to determine strategies on how to prevent homelessness before it happens.

3. Continue to Center Equitable Solutions

The ongoing disproportionality of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) experiencing homelessness requires our state to dismantle systems that do not work for marginalized communities. We commend Commerce for elevating the need to empower By and For organizations working in communities closest to the issue, building their capacity and creating programs that eliminate the barriers many communities face when accessing housing. Additionally, the new objective to strengthen the homeless service provider workforce through livable wages, improved safety, and cultural competency will increase access to services for those furthest from housing equity.

These are just a few highlights of what our state should prioritize over the next several years. We thank Commerce for listening to communities in developing this plan and relying on evidence-based programs that we know work to prevent and end homelessness. This blueprint should be the starting point for our state's work, and we ask that the Legislature continue to scale effective programs to meet the needs on the ground.

On behalf of the SACH, I would like to thank you for your ongoing work to ensure that everyone in our state has a safe place to live. Please let us know how we can best help you in this work going forward.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila Babb Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheila Babb Anderson
Interim Chair, State Advisory Council on Homelessness

State of Washington Homeless Housing Strategic Plan 2024-2029

PURSUANT TO RCW 43.185C.040

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- Washington Low-Income Housing Alliance - Resident Action Project
- Youth 4 Youth Board members
- State Advisory Committee on Homelessness and the Interagency Committee on Homelessness
- Statewide Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Service Provider Network

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Translated versions of this Plan in languages other than English may also be requested. To submit a request, please call 360-725-4000.

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Executive summary

Overview

This update to Washington's Homeless Housing Strategic Plan (the Plan)¹ describes the specific actions the Department of Commerce (Commerce) will take over the next five years to achieve a reduction in homelessness. The Plan aims to reduce homelessness in Washington by strengthening relationships with partners and communities most impacted by homelessness. Commerce strengthens the homeless crisis response system by pursuing resources necessary for immediate assistance, temporary housing, and the 1.1 million additional housing units needed over the next 20 years.²

Commerce developed the Plan in consultation with people who have experienced homelessness and housing instability, tribal representatives, local governments and service providers from across the state.

Highlights

In alignment with community feedback, the Plan includes five objectives to address Washington's homelessness crisis.

- **Objective 1:** Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce
- **Objective 3:** Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible
- **Objective 4:** Prioritize those with the most significant barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Over the next five years, Commerce will increase support for strategies that reduce homelessness rates through efforts to prevent people at risk of losing their housing from becoming homeless. Additionally, the Plan focuses on the growth, retention and working conditions for the service provider workforce on the front lines, identifying and addressing the needs of homeless households.

In addition, the Plan continues the state's efforts to increase equity, transparency and accountability within the homeless crisis response system. This means advancing the understanding that homelessness disproportionately harms historically marginalized communities, especially Black and African-American households, Native American households, people who identify as LGBTQ2S+, youth, and young adults. This knowledge supports the development of programs and supports that bring all people experiencing homelessness inside. Commerce identifies reducing the barriers to housing access and increasing the variety of housing options as key strategies to reducing homelessness over the next five years.

Next steps

Starting in 2024, Commerce will work with counties across the state to develop their five-year homeless housing plans for 2025-2030. The process will emphasize the importance of crisis response systems that match the local context while aligning with statewide goals.

¹ The previous plan "State of Washington Homeless Housing Crisis Response System Strategic Plan 2019-2024" can be found on Commerce's website, <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Homeless-Housing-Strategic-Plan-2019-2024.pdf>

² (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

Introduction

Washington is in the midst of an affordable housing and homelessness crisis.³ Housing cost and lack of housing are a key driver of homelessness, a finding confirmed through dialogues with communities, first-hand accounts, and peer-reviewed research. The homeless experience disproportionately impacts historically marginalized communities.⁴ The overrepresentation of Black and Native American populations experiencing homelessness in Washington highlights these disparities. Regardless of an individual's characteristics and background, homelessness creates a vicious cycle:

- Lowering employment opportunities
- Increasing risk of untimely death
- Increasing risk of interpersonal violence and traumatization
- Worsening mental and physical health
- Damaging familiar and social bonds
- Perpetuating cycles of incarceration⁵

This 2024-2029 Washington State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan (the Plan) provides a coordinated, multi-level, multi-sector response to guide state and local homeless crisis response efforts. Commerce issued guidance for local jurisdictions preparing local homeless housing plans⁶ to coordinate efforts, align activities, and establish common timelines.

Statutory requirements

[Chapter 43.185C RCW](#) authorizes the homeless housing and eviction prevention programs within Commerce and directs the agency to prepare and publish the Plan and the accompanying local plan guidance.

Table 1: Plan requirements and correlating components in RCW 43.185C.040(1)

Subsection	Legislative requirement	Cross-reference
(a)	Performance measures and goals to reduce homelessness, including long-term and short-term goals;	System goals and Implementation plan actions, measures and timelines (pages 28-33)
(b)	An analysis of the services and programs being offered at the state and county level and an identification of those representing best practices and outcomes;	Analysis of services and programs (page 18)
(c)	Recognition of services and programs targeted to certain homeless populations or geographic areas in recognition of the diverse needs across the state;	Recognition of services and programs offered (pages 19-21)

³ (University of Washington 2023)

⁴ (Washington State Department of Commerce. Data and Performance Unit 2021)

⁵ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2023) (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2023)

⁶ (Washington State Department of Commerce 2018)

Subsection	Legislative requirement	Cross-reference
(d)	New or innovative funding, program, or service strategies to pursue;	Innovative strategies to improve housing security(pages 22-26)
(e)	An analysis of either current drivers of homelessness or improvements to housing security, or both, such as increases and reductions to employment opportunities, housing scarcity and affordability, health and behavioral health services, chemical dependency treatment, and incarceration rates; and	Key drivers of homelessness (pages 13-14)
(f)	An implementation strategy outlining the roles and responsibilities at the state and local level and timelines to achieve a reduction in homelessness at the statewide level during periods of the five-year homeless housing strategic plan.	Roles and responsibilities (pages 15-17 and System goals and Implementation plan actions, measures and timelines (pages 28-33)

Guiding vision, principles and goals

The Plan is guided by the Commerce Housing Division's primary core value: **Everyone deserves to be housed.** The Housing Division's core values were developed through collaborative efforts by division staff and management to act as cultural cornerstones to guide the work of an organizational development plan that includes goals, activities and performance measures.

The following statements guided the development of the Plan and will direct its implementation:

Vision

Everyone experiencing homelessness and housing instability has swift and equitable access to stable housing that meets their needs.

Mission

Foster relationships with stakeholders and communities most impacted by homelessness to strengthen a collaborative, transparent, effective, and trauma-informed response system that centers racial equity.

Guiding principles

- We will partner with people with lived experience of homelessness to identify person-centered strategies that promote long-term stability.
- We will take urgent and bold action to reduce homelessness.
- We will support interventions that take into account individual need, community context, and best practices.

The Plan incorporates elements of "All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness."⁷ Using federal benchmarks and criteria gives Washington a strategic framework for competing for federal funding and when reporting outcomes. Additionally, Washington is a national leader on accounting for every dollar spent on homeless housing services and projects.

The Plan sets the following goals for Washington's homeless crisis response system:

- **Objective 1:** Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce
- **Objective 3:** Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible
- **Objective 4:** Prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

More about the Plan development process can be found in [Appendix A: Development process](#).

Alignment with other planning activities

Growth Management Act housing revisions

[Chapter 254, Laws of 2021](#) (HB 1220) amended the Growth Management Act to require local governments to "plan for and accommodate" housing that is affordable to all income levels. The law also directed Commerce to project each county's future housing needs by income bracket. Commerce estimated that Washington will need 1.1 million additional homes by 2044, with half for households making less than 50% of the area median income, including 122,469 permanent supportive housing units. In addition, Washington will need to add 91,357 emergency housing beds.⁸

Counties must allocate housing needs projections among cities, towns, and rural centers. Each community then plans for and accommodates housing for their portion of the countywide housing needs. For the lowest income segments, plans must ensure adequate land capacity for the housing needed, generally land already zoned for multifamily housing or commercial uses. Local governments are not required to build housing, but they must identify barriers to the development of housing. They must consider how to support and incentivize low-income housing development and encourage the market to provide smaller and lower-cost units that can serve more households across the income spectrum. Washington counties must adopt local comprehensive plans that address these requirements.

Chapter 254, Laws of 2021 also requires cities to allow emergency housing in zones that allow hotels and permanent supportive housing (PSH) and in zones that allow residential development or hotels. Commerce has developed various resources to help local governments understand and implement the law. Cities that have not updated their municipal codes to comply with the requirements by September 2021 must address the requirement as part of their comprehensive plan periodic update.

Local providers of temporary and permanent housing should pay attention to local legislative processes to adopt ordinances that allow these housing types and support their adoption to ease local project siting and permitting. Providers may want to coordinate with staff and provide feedback on draft ordinances to identify potential new barriers that might occur with updated regulations. These updates to statewide planning requirements and the resources provided by Commerce directly address upstream barriers to the development of housing for people who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Though significant funding

⁷ (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness 2022)

⁸ (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

and service gaps remain, addressing land use policy and low-income housing development incentives will influence future housing inventory and housing costs.

This planning work aligns closely with the objectives of the Plan in the following areas:

- **Objective 1:** Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Office of Apple Health & Homes and Permanent Supportive Housing

[Chapter 216, Laws of 2022](#) (ESHB 1866) created the Office of Apple Health & Homes and Permanent Supportive Housing (AHAH-PSH) within Commerce. The Apple Health & Homes program (AHAH) pairs Commerce's expertise in housing capital financing and ongoing subsidies with the Healthcare Authority's (HCA) employment and housing supportive services (Foundational Community Supports or FCS). The AHAH program enables participants to lead independent and self-directed lives in their own homes.

Commerce's role with permanent supportive housing is multi-faceted:

- In partnership with HCA, other state agencies, and housing and service providers, coordinate efforts related to providing permanent supportive housing (PSH)
- Provide capital financing for the acquisition or construction of housing available to AHAH-eligible participants
- Distribute financial assistance to eligible housing providers and program participants
- Issues grants that develop, expand, and sustain high-quality PSH

With [Chapter 266, Laws of 2022](#) (SHB 1724) the Legislature created the [Permanent Supportive Housing Advisory Committee](#). This body provides guidance on the administration of PSH programs managed by Commerce.⁹ The Committee is developing priorities and plans for increasing and strengthening PSH in Washington through capital, anti-discrimination, financial subsidy and systems of care. The Plan supports and draws on the Committee's work to date.

This permanent supportive housing work aligns closely with the objectives of the Plan in the following areas:

- **Objective 1:** Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce
- **Objective 4:** Prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Coordinating with the Affordable Housing Advisory Board

The Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB), authorized under [RCW 43.185B.020](#), advises the Department of Commerce on housing and housing-related issues. In 2024, AHAB published the 2023-2028 Affordable Housing Advisory Plan.¹⁰

This component of a future state affordable housing strategy includes four key recommendations:

1. **Resources:** A permanent funding stream for the state Housing Trust Fund, exploring funding options for a wide variety of housing types and encouraging the use of government-owned surplus land and new transit areas for affordable housing development.
2. **Land use:** Supporting land use regulation and planning by assisting local jurisdictions in their processes and providing statewide zoning standards for housing.

⁹ (Washington State Legislature 2022)

¹⁰ (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023) (Washington State Department of Commerce 2022)

3. **Administration:** Improving upon administrative processes to lower approval periods, administrative costs, and the overall complexity of the process.
4. **Construction cost:** Increasing construction by creating flexibility in state funding to adapt to high construction costs, supporting construction job training and apprenticeship programs, and developing technical assistance that would encourage a wider variety of housing models available.

The Plan acknowledges affordable housing's key role in the long-term resolution of the current homelessness crisis. The Plan highlights the need for additional resources and land use changes to meet the 20-year housing targets. Additionally, the homeless housing and assistance services described in the Plan's objectives and actions would support the stability of those housed through the realization of the AHAB plan's recommendations.

This affordable housing work aligns closely with the objectives of the Plan in the following areas:

- **Objective 3:** Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Reinforcing the "Blueprint for a Just and Equitable Future: The 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty in Washington"

The State Poverty Reduction Workgroup developed a 10-year plan¹¹ to build a just and equitable future where all Washingtonians have their basic needs met, and the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. The 10-year plan's recommendations include several related to reducing housing instability and homelessness. It outlines strategies to make the cost of living more affordable by building and preserving affordable housing through state investments through Commerce's Housing Trust Fund.

The 10-year plan also highlights policies that would:

- Increase the availability of affordable housing for student parents
- Encourage the participation of people with lived experience of poverty and homelessness in decision-making positions
- Adopt the Housing First approach¹²
- Increase rental assistance and diversion programs
- Improve access to behavioral health prevention
- Address the holistic needs of households experiencing homelessness and poverty

This poverty reduction work aligns closely to the objectives of the Plan in the following areas:

- **Objective 1:** Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce
- **Objective 3:** Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Drawing on the Ruckelshaus Center's "Pathways to Housing Security"

In December 2023, [The William D. Ruckelshaus Center](#) published the final report in a series titled "[A Pathway to Housing Security](#)." This work finalized a legislatively mandated effort to investigate key drivers of homelessness, and engage stakeholders across Washington in identifying themes to strengthen housing security. The final report and fact-finding report are referenced throughout the Plan. The Ruckelshaus Center

¹¹ (Washington State Poverty Reduction Workgroup 2020)

¹² Housing First is a homelessness assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness. (Turner 2014)

identified 11 guiding principles and 26 recommendations that would strengthen housing security and reduce homelessness statewide. These principles provided a key framework for the development of the Implementation plan section.

This housing security work aligns closely to the objectives of the Plan in the following areas:

- **Objective 1:** Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce
- **Objective 3:** Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible
- **Objective 4:** Prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Identifying tailored strategies to support youth experiencing homelessness

A Way Home Washington published "[Yes to Yes" Washington State: Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Landscape Scan](#)" in March 2024. The report resulted from ongoing collaboration between Commerce, youth homelessness advocates, nonprofits, and community members. This work informed gaps in services for youth and young adults and provided recommendations that shaped the strategies in the Plan.

This youth homelessness work aligns closely with the objectives of the Plan in the following areas:

- **Objective 1:** Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce
- **Objective 3:** Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible
- **Objective 4:** Prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm
- **Objective 5:** Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Extent of the homelessness crisis and its impacts on Washington

Homelessness is increasing

Homelessness is increasing in Washington and every community bears the impacts of this crisis. According to Commerce's July 2023 "[Snapshot of Homelessness in Washington](#)" report, over 200,000 Washingtonians currently experience homelessness or housing instability, a record high rate. The extent of the crisis is expansive, highlighting the lack of appropriate necessary resources, causing harms to both the youth and adults experiencing homelessness and worsening the historic inequities faced by marginalized populations in Washington. The disturbing increases in homelessness over the past five years demand bold action.

Since July 2018, the number of people in Washington experiencing housing instability or homelessness has increased by 10%.¹³ In King County, total estimated homelessness and housing instability has risen 17% from 2018 to 2023. This trend manifests not just in urban centers, but also in rural and frontier communities.¹⁴ Yakima, Whatcom and Stevens counties have experienced 17%, 13%, and 14% increases respectively.¹⁵ Increasing homelessness overwhelms communities' homeless crisis response systems, leading to long waitlists for housing and services, increases in unsanctioned public camping, spiraling public health crises, and incalculable suffering.

Harmful impacts of homelessness

Homelessness produces long-lasting impacts, including premature death, physical and mental health disabilities, decreased educational attainment in youth, cycles of incarceration and the inability to secure or retain employment. Due to an overwhelming demand for temporary emergency housing, and limited available supply, many people must make the difficult decision of finding an alternative place to stay. Living in places not meant for human habitation exposes people to physical health risks such as adverse weather, communicable diseases, poor nutrition and violence.¹⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated this vulnerability in the disproportionate rates of infection, hospitalization and death.¹⁷ In a report published by King County, there were much lower vaccination rates among the homeless population than the general population about a year after the vaccine rollout.¹⁸

People living outside also have worsened environmental health outcomes, both due to exposure to extreme weather events, and a lack of access to basic hygiene.

Individuals experiencing homelessness also have a much higher rate of mental health disorders, which is a predictor of homelessness and a result of homelessness. In national results from the 2022 Point-In-Time count, about 21% of individuals experiencing homelessness reported having a serious mental health disorder.¹⁹ Youth and young adults experiencing homelessness are highly likely to have had traumatizing experiences during their childhood, with more than 80% of study subjects meeting the diagnostic threshold for

¹³ (Washington State Department of Commerce 2018), (Commerce 2023)

¹⁴ See the Glossary for definitions of "County, urban," "County, rural," and "County, frontier."

¹⁵ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2023); (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

¹⁶ (Washington State Department of Health 2018)

¹⁷ (Bagget and Gaeta 2021) (E. Mosite 2022)

¹⁸ (Public Health Seattle & King County 2022)

¹⁹ (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2023)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).²⁰ However, beyond the experiences of anxiety and PTSD being correlated with homelessness, the experience of homelessness itself also causes heightened trauma. There is a high correlation between stressful life events during bouts of homelessness and increased substance use.²¹ Studies have shown that more than two-thirds of homeless individuals with substance use disorders began using substances after becoming homeless.²²

The criminalization of homelessness furthers harms

With the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Grants Pass v. Johnson*,²³ local jurisdictions now have the ability to criminalize camping and sleeping in public. While this has already been a primary response from local governments, the decision is likely to spread the practice even further. A punitive response to homelessness goes against evidence-based practices and in fact, can worsen both homelessness and crime.²⁴

Impacts of homelessness and housing instability on youth

The impacts of homelessness carry far beyond those who are in adulthood. Youth experiencing homelessness have their own set of struggles and adverse outcomes. One of these specifically is in their educational outcomes. Homelessness and housing instability lead to more frequent school changes, which creates challenges for young people to create bonds with teachers and peers. Research shows “high-frequency movers” are more likely to repeat grades, drop out of school and have lower test scores than their peers.²⁵

Disparate impacts of homelessness

Due to Washington's history of exclusionary and racist housing, employment and government policies homelessness disproportionately harms people of color, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, people with disabilities and individuals who identify with multiple marginalized groups.²⁶ Black and Native American people experience homelessness at much higher rates than their white peers and experience more barriers to receiving services (See Figure 1). Individuals who fall within these racial and ethnic communities, and also identify as youth or young adults, LGBTQIA+, and/or disabled face even greater hurdles to finding services that meet their needs. During the Plan's development, people with homelessness experience shared that without affirmative and culturally competent support for multiple marginalized individuals and communities, we cannot break the cycle of homelessness and housing instability.

²⁰ (C. Dawson-Rose 2020)

²¹ (A. Alexander 2022)

²² (G. Johnson 2008)

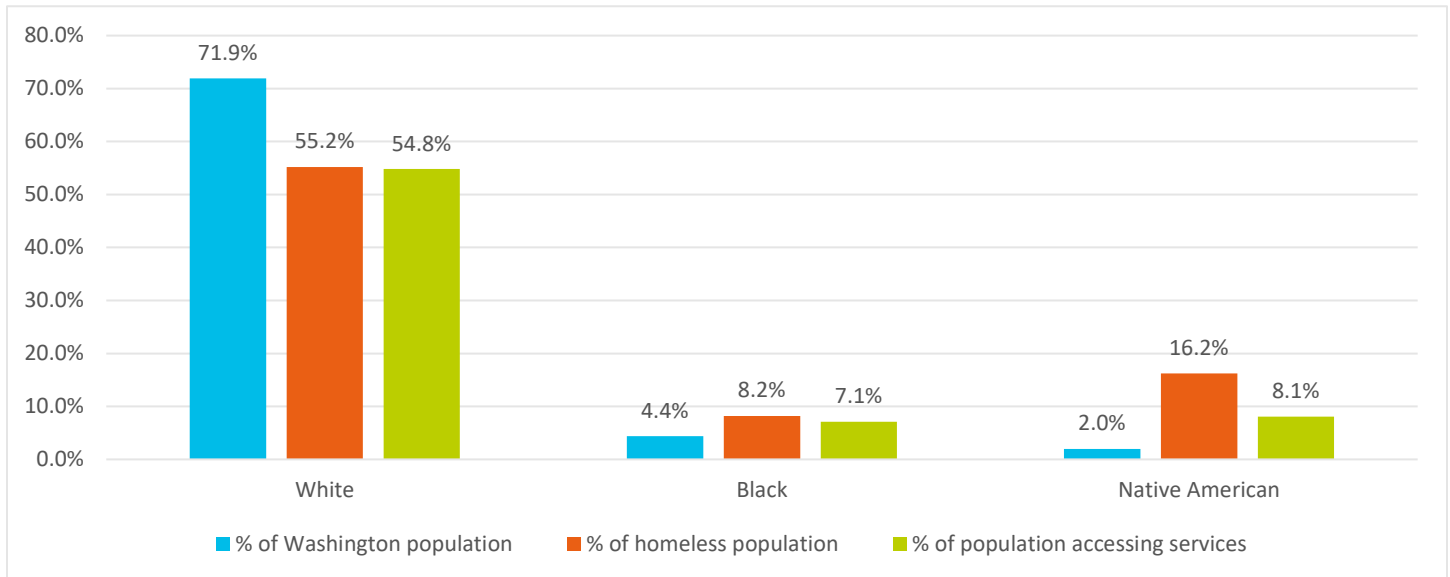
²³ (U.S. Supreme Court 2024)

²⁴ (H. Love 2024)

²⁵ (M. Galvez 2014)

²⁶ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2023)

Figure 1: Disparities in experiences of homelessness and access to services in Washington



Source: (Washington State Department of Commerce 2022) (Washington Office of Financial Management 2022)

To mitigate the harms that homelessness inflicts upon individuals effectively, particularly those with multiple marginalized identities, Washington needs to take bold action in addressing both its symptoms and the underlying causes.

Key drivers of homelessness

The conclusion that individual circumstances alone explain homelessness fails when we examine available evidence. While individual characteristics like mental health disorders, poverty, employment status and disability can describe a person's risk of experiencing homelessness, they do not explain differences in rates of homelessness between communities. Recent statistical analysis has shown that nationally, some high-poverty cities have low rates of homelessness. Additionally, counties with similar levels of mental health and substance use disorders have large differences in their rates of homelessness.²⁷ The evidence suggests that the risk of homelessness increases in the presence of both structural pressures and individual characteristics. Examples of types of structural pressures and individual characteristics that are drivers of homelessness are highlighted in Table 2.²⁸

When comparing rates of homelessness across communities, structural variables correlate strongly (over 0.4 R-squared values) with higher per capita incidence of homelessness.²⁹ They create an environment that destabilizes housing security, and disproportionately elevates the risk of homelessness for people from marginalized communities, particularly for households led by women of color and for people who identify as LGBTQIA2S+.³⁰ These individual factors, often beyond a person's control, interact with larger structural pressures, worsening a person's risk of experiencing homelessness.³¹

²⁷ (G. Colburn 2023)

²⁸ (Dawkins 2023)

²⁹ (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

³⁰ (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

³¹ (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

Table 2: Factors influencing risk of homelessness

Structural pressures	Individual characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low housing stock and low vacancy rates ○ Chronic underdevelopment and preservation of affordable housing ○ Cost of housing ○ Limited social safety net ○ Income inequality ○ Social exclusion ○ Ongoing and legacy impacts of systemic racism ○ Economic volatility, and ○ Natural hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job loss or household income loss ○ Intimate partner violence ○ Health emergencies ○ Limited educational attainment ○ Family instability

The risk of homelessness surges when a household experiences one or more individual characteristic events against the backdrop of an insufficient societal safety net and inadequate supply of affordable housing.³²

With a thorough understanding of key drivers of homelessness that take into account systemic failures and individual risk factors, Commerce can better direct a coordinated statewide homeless crisis response. The Plan takes these factors into account and proposes objectives and actions that would address both the active experience of homelessness as well as structural pressures and individual risk factors.

³² (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

The statewide homeless housing crisis response

Overview

The plan must outline roles and responsibilities at the state and local level to achieve a reduction in homelessness statewide. This section describes the structure of the state's homeless crisis response, the parts played by different levels of government, and the activities carried out by faith-based groups and human services organizations. The plan seeks to align and unify approaches around a common vision supported by a set of universal objectives identified by people with lived experience, and aligned with evidence-based practice.

Setting system priorities

Each of the organizations involved in the homeless crisis response has a process for identifying its homelessness-related goals:

- **Non-profit and faith-based entities** set priorities based on their mission and strategic planning process and any public homelessness assistance funding they receive.
- **Local governments** identify policy and funding priorities in a five-year [local homeless housing plan](#), supplemented by the guidance and direction of local homeless housing task force. The current planning period for local homeless housing plans is 2025-2030.
- **Commerce** documents policy and programmatic goals through this Plan and accompanying program guidelines.
- For **state and local governments receiving federal funding**, their plans for services and assistance are described in either their Continuum of Care collaborative application, or in formula-grant consolidated plans.
- The **federal government** establishes homeless housing and assistance priorities through Congressional appropriations and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness's Strategic Plan.³³

Structure of Washington's response to homelessness

In Washington, the response to homelessness consists of federal, statewide and local efforts. The Plan provides a framework to ensure alignment of the various initiatives at every level of government. Services to assist households experiencing homelessness occur at the county-level and are delivered by contracted service providers or local government agencies.

All 39 Washington counties have local sources of funding dedicated to providing homeless housing and assistance services. The counties have organized themselves into 37 single or multi-county crisis response systems. The five most populous counties in the state receive additional direct federal funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The other 34 crisis response systems work with Commerce to submit collaborative applications for HUD funding. Finally, the Legislature appropriates funding

³³ (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness 2022)

from state revenues for homeless housing and assistance, which Commerce distributes as competitive and noncompetitive grants to counties and nonprofit service providers.

Roles and responsibilities

This subsection provides descriptions of the roles and responsibilities involved in a collaborative and effective statewide homeless crisis response system.

Those with first-hand experience of housing insecurity

For this Plan to respond to the needs those experience homelessness, those who are experiencing firsthand the homelessness crisis must play a key role. While it is not their responsibility to find and implement programs and services, it is their role to share with the overseers of such programs what they need to stabilize their housing. When encountering the homeless crisis response system, people with homelessness experience should be asked what they need for stable housing.

Community-based organizations deliver services

Service providers and housing agencies play the on-the-ground role in implementing the homeless crisis response system within their county or multi-county region. To implement the vision of the Plan in its entirety, these organizations must identify individuals in need of their support and ask, “What do you need, and how can we work with you to provide that?” This requires implementing proven best practices such as Housing First,³⁴ harm reduction, and trauma-informed care. Many agencies in Washington are using these practices, and have seen their clients achieve stability and positive housing outcomes. Service providers will also play a role in the development of local regulations and countywide planning policy development for the distribution of emergency housing targets.

Counties lead the local homeless crisis response

Within Washington, counties and local jurisdictions play a leading role in implementing homeless crisis response systems that bring people inside. While working with Commerce to create a statewide coordinated effort, guided by [coordinated entry guidelines](#), each jurisdiction operates within its own unique structures and political environments to bring people inside. Each county in the state is responsible for creating their own local homeless housing plan, in alignment with the state plan. Commerce helps in this process by providing local plan guidance. Counties contract with nonprofits and service providers to deliver services.

Commerce coordinates the statewide efforts

With differing systems in place across cities and counties, Commerce plays an important role in ensuring that jurisdictions across the state are provided with assistance in coordination, clear guidance on how to achieve key objectives, and facilitation for inter-governmental and interagency work.

Through preparing this Plan and the accompanying local plan guidance, Commerce plays a key role in coordinating and aligning statewide efforts to reduce and eliminate homelessness. The work of Commerce informs and supports the development of local and homeless housing plans.

Commerce works toward statewide homelessness reduction goals by:

- Establishing requirements for funds distributed to local governments and nonprofit organizations
- Providing technical assistance and training to both lead and sub grantees

³⁴ (Turner 2014)

- Fostering partnerships and coordinating efforts with other state agencies

The Plan's section titled [Implementation plan](#) describes statewide objectives, and actions in detail.

State agencies work together to strengthen housing security

Commerce plays the leading role in this response and works in collaboration with other agencies to ensure cooperation on all aspects of housing the state's homeless population. Other state agencies, including the Health Care Authority, Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Corrections, the Office of Equity, the Department of Children and Youth and Families, and many more are needed to successfully implement the Plan. Homelessness is a multi-faceted issue that involves behavioral and public health, jail and prison systems, foster care and much more.

Federal agencies set national policy and distribute funds

Federal agencies implement laws and operate programs that directly support housing security in Washington. Across 19 different departments, offices, administrations and bureaus, more than 130 programs directly or indirectly support housing security and the needs of people experiencing homelessness. The Federal Government is a key partner in addressing the homelessness crisis, which has its roots in economic insecurity, income inequality and federal policies that established systemic inequities. Several interventions funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Veteran's Affairs have proved as a promising support of asset-building and reducing veteran homelessness.

Washington's communities play their part

During the formation of this Plan, Commerce held several workshops with service providers and individuals with homelessness and housing instability experience. While many topics related to what the state could be doing better arose, another common theme demonstrated the need for community-wide action. Representatives in the workshops overwhelmingly felt that the stigma and negative perceptions people hold about those experiencing homelessness was making it harder for people to gain stability. There is a call from experts in the homeless crisis response system for the public to have a better understanding of homeless issues and to exhibit empathy for people experiencing housing instability. With a greater public resistance to empathy for people experiencing homelessness, it is more challenging for the state to grow its stock of services and permanent housing options.

Analysis of services and programs

By statute, this Plan must include "An analysis of the services and programs being offered at the state and county level and an identification of those representing best practices and outcomes."

Every year, Commerce develops and publishes the [Homeless Housing Project Expenditure Report](#) ("Golden Report"). The Golden Report provides a summary of every homeless housing or assistance program receiving public funds in Washington. Each county supplies data on investments made and this is combined with data from the different Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) across Washington to provide a picture of funds expended and program performance:

- The state fiscal year [2023 homeless housing projects expenditure and data report \("Golden Report"\) is available on Commerce's website.](#)
- To find out more about how Commerce uses these data to identify those representing best practices and outcomes, visit [the Homeless System Performance page on Commerce's website.](#)

Additionally, Commerce produces the [County Report Card](#) dashboard to analyze efforts at the county-level. This publication uses data from the Golden Report to produce a breakdown of homeless system performance by county and by project type (i.e. emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, etc.):

- The state fiscal year [2022 Washington State County Report Cards can be found on Commerce's Tableau website.](#)
- To find out more about how Commerce uses these data, visit [the Homeless System Performance page on Commerce's website.](#)

Recognition of services and programs offered

[RCW 43.185C.040\(1\)\(c\)](#) requires the Plan to include "Recognition of services and programs targeted to certain homeless populations or geographic areas in recognition of the diverse needs across the state." The following highlighted projects were selected based on their focus on historically underserved populations or for providing focused services to subgroups with specific needs such as families with children in rural areas. Results are separated and grouped by the five Continua of Care (CoC) regions that receive direct federal funding (King, Pierce, Snohomish, Clark, Spokane), and projects serving the other 34 counties in Washington, collectively termed the "Balance of State Continuum of Care."

Table 8: Emergency shelter highlights from five independent CoCs, SFY 2023

County	Agency and project name	Key demographic(s) served in SFY 2023
King	Urban League King's Inn	Black (40%)
Clark	Council for the Homeless Emergency Shelter	Single adults (100%)
King	YWCA SIS Late Night Shelter	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (100%)
Pierce	Korean Women's Association We Are Family DV Shelter	Families with children (100%)
Snohomish	Interfaith Association of NW WA Miracle House	Black (61%)

Source: (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

Table 9: Emergency shelter highlights from Balance of State CoC, SFY 2023

County	Agency and project name	Key demographics served in SFY 2023
Island	Citizens Against Domestic Abuse	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Families with children (94%)
Okanogan	The Support Center Elinor House Shelter	Single adults (79%)
Thurston	Safe Place Shelter	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black (26%) ○ Native (15%) ○ Hispanic (21%)
San Juan	Safe San Juans	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hispanic (22%)
Yakima	Grace City Outreach Toppenish	Hispanic (25%) Native (52%)

Source: (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

Table 10: Transitional housing highlights from five independent CoCs, SFY 2023

County	Agency and Project Name	Key Demographics served in FY 2023
Clark	Safechoice YWCA	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black (35%) ○ Hispanic (35%)
Snohomish	Domestic Violence Services Joint Transitional Housing	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black (32%)
King	Muslim Housing Services – Transitional	Black (93%)
King	YMCA YAIT and Shared Homes	Young adults (18-24): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black (47%) ○ Hispanic (24%) ○ Transgender/Non-binary (18%)
King	YouthCare – Master Leasing	Young adults (18 to 24): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black (47%) ○ Asian American (16%) ○ Native (11%) ○ Transgender/Non-binary (26%)

Source: (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

Table 11: Transitional housing highlights from Balance of State CoC, SFY 2023

County	Agency and Project Name	Key Demographics Served in FY 2023
Pend Oreille	Family Crisis Network Garden Village	Families with children (100%)
Clallam	Healthy Families of Clallam County Rose House	Families with children (100%)
Island	Citizens Against Domestic Abuse Marjie’s House	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault (100%)
Walla Walla	Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington’s The Loft	Asian American (33%) Hispanic (67%) Youth (13 to 17)

Source: (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

Table 12: Rapid re-housing highlights from five independent CoCs, SFY 2023

County	Agency and Project Name	Key Demographics Served in FY 2023
Pierce	Korean Women’s Association Pathway Home	Asian American (14%) Black (64%)
King	Chief Seattle Club	Single adults: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Native (91%)
Snohomish	Snohomish County Veteran Assistance Rapid Rehousing	Veterans (100%)
Clark	Lifeline Connections	Black (71%) Families with children (100%)
King	Neighborhood House Family Rapid Rehousing	Black (51%) Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (42%) Families with children (100%)

Source: (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

Table 13: Rapid re-housing highlights from Balance of State CoC

County	Project	Key Demographics Served in FY 2023
Skagit	Northwest Youth Services Rapid Rehousing	Youth (13-17): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hispanic (65%)
Kitsap	North Kitsap Fishline Rapid Rehousing	Native (20%) Black (60%) Hispanic (20%)
Whatcom	Northwest Youth Services (Whatcom) Rapid Rehousing	Young adults (18-24): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native (27%) Black (18%) Transgender/ Non-binary (9%)
Whatcom	Samish Indian Nation Rapid Rehousing	Native (100%)
San Juan	Safe San Juan Rapid Rehousing	Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hispanic (23%)

Source: (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

Innovative strategies to improve housing security

Commerce will use evidence-based best practices supported by the experiences of those who have been homeless and the most current research to achieve this Plan's objectives. The Plan's objectives came from conversations with people with lived experience of homelessness, service providers, and other stakeholders.

People with lived experience of homelessness and service providers identified the following themes to guide prioritization of actions:

- Delivering resources swiftly and equitably
- Meeting people's needs
- Promoting long-term stability

The following sections present a series of strategies and evidence-based best practices that respond to the themes above.

Strategies for swift systems: collaborative leadership and service coordination

Research highlights several best practices for improving service timeliness of the homeless crisis response system. They fall into two categories: collaborative leadership and service coordination.

Collaborative leadership

Evidence shows that collaborative leadership, defined as leadership across sectors, providers and experiences, supports highly efficient systems. In a study of 18 different communities across the United States, researchers found that sharing power across services providers improved efficiency.³⁵ Events such as large-scale strategy retreats that brought all service providers in the Continuum of Care together, allowed for shared decision-making about funding allocations and service coordination. Other studies have found that lead agencies that promote this kind of collaboration:

- Strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration
- Support a positive and empowering work environment for front-line staff
- Engage people with homelessness and housing instability experience in decision-making processes
- Clarify needs that inform regional and national government policy
- Disseminate essential information more effectively
- Cultivate connections that serve as an efficient emergency communication infrastructure

The COVID-19 outbreak and resulting pandemic in March 2020 provides a clear example of these principles. The urgency of the situation led to increased cross-sector collaboration between homeless service providers and public health organizations. This increased trust sparked innovations in service coordination, and ultimately brought more people experiencing homelessness into different types of housing and services.³⁶ Effectiveness increases further when system operators include the voices of those with homelessness experience in planning efforts. When individuals experiencing homelessness give their perspective to the planning and provision of services, programs are more likely to work for those who need them.³⁷

³⁵ (Mosley 2021)

³⁶ (Bessel 2019) (J. Karabanow 2023)

³⁷ (J. Karabanow 2023)

Service coordination

Providing the supports needed by households experiencing homelessness requires the coordinated efforts of multiple service providers.

Research shows that an efficient homeless crisis response system:

1. Brings together providers to collaboratively identify collaboratively service gaps and handoffs
2. Carefully documents how providers should manage those gaps and communicate together³⁸

Having a clear map of resources available to assist households that documents services, housing programs, eligibility criteria, availability, wait times, outreach protocols and case management builds transparency and trust. Once a system has clarity on the breadth and depth of services available then service providers can use a standardized assessment tool with 24/7 availability to match clients with services that best meet their needs. The benefits from such efficiencies depend on strong working relationships, faithful implementation, continuous improvement, regular communication and a commitment to common practices. Bottlenecks in service availability can diminish these efficiencies, as waitlists grow and exits to permanent housing stagnate. The Plan proposes actions to address the lack of supportive services or permanent affordable housing, and urges providers to continue to invest in service coordination. Coordinating services across service providers will not resolve the issue of homelessness, but it will support a higher quality and more efficient response.

The Plan aligns with the best practices of collaborative leadership and service coordination by proposing objectives and actions that:

- **All objectives** emphasize collaborative leadership
- **Objective 1** calls for relationship building with local communities, nonprofit partners, individuals with lived expertise in homeless response systems and other state agencies
- **Objective 3** develops a standardized assessment and prioritization tool for the Balance of State CoC to better streamline and coordinate within the response system

Strategies for ensuring equity: program staffing and Targeted Universalism

The history of systemic racism in the United States continues to shape communities' housing security, economic security, and incidence of homelessness. This is evident in the data highlighted in the section Extent of the homelessness crisis and its impacts on Washington. Commerce and the county-level homeless crisis response systems in Washington must work together to identify and dismantle policies, programs, and practices that result in harms disproportionately experienced by the state's racial/ethnic minorities. In addition, such systems often fail to provide for the needs of other marginalized groups. Stakeholders identified equity in homeless service provision as an area for improvement.

Current best practice and research point to two strategies:

1. **Program staffing**
2. **Targeted Universalism**

³⁸ (Turner 2014) (Bessel 2019)

Program staffing

Cronley et al. state, "Reducing disparities among individuals experiencing homelessness requires increasing diversity and inclusion among the persons providing services to those experiencing homelessness."³⁹ Commerce also heard this finding from communities while developing this Plan. Diverse representation applies to both the direct service providers and the people making policy and procedure decisions.

Organizational diversity can be modeled in various ways, including:

- Funders prioritize resource allocation to organizations representing and reflecting the populations served⁴⁰
- Develop community advisory boards and client-based committees to help decision-making and promote equity when staff diversity is lacking⁴¹

Targeted Universalism

Targeted Universalism aims to improve the system as a whole by targeting approaches to the populations with the worst outcomes.^{42, 43} For Targeted Universalism to function as intended, it is important to disaggregate demographic data to consider specific community contexts. For example, Native American and Black-led households (particularly those led by Black women) are much more disproportionately represented in the homeless population than other communities of color are.⁴⁴ For this reason, it is critical to connect with those communities to understand the underlying causes of disparities, and create and fund interventions that will help with their situations. For example, Black individuals with substance use disorders are less likely than their white counterparts to seek professional rehabilitation services, and are more likely to use community-based 12-step-style programs (which are less likely to receive government funding).⁴⁵ Specific actions that promote access to housing for Black households include removing barriers to housing such as credit scores, criminal history records and up-front deposit requirements.⁴⁶

The Plan strengthens equity in the homeless crisis response by integrating Targeted Universalism and Program Staffing approaches in the following areas:

- **Objective 1** provides concrete actions tied directly to accountability to lived experience advisory groups and the input they provide in system operations.
- **Objective 2** strengthens the homeless service provider workforce, directly speaks to fostering equity by funding and providing technical assistance to by-and-for housing and service providers (those that are run by and serve marginalized or historically excluded communities).
- **Objective 4** prioritizes those with the greatest barriers to housing stability, aims to use the targeted universalist approach by adopting a vulnerability screening tool based on the understanding of which barriers are most impactful for households seeking permanent housing and to make sure programs and services are prioritizing the elimination of the most obstructive barriers that create inequities.

³⁹ (C. Cronley 2024)

⁴⁰ (C. Cronley 2024) (D. Kim 2023)

⁴¹ (C. Cronley 2024)

⁴² (j. powell 2019)

⁴³ (L. Chao 2024)

⁴⁴ (C. Cronley 2024)

⁴⁵ (D. Kim 2023)

⁴⁶ (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

Strategies for meeting individual needs: resource variety and one-on-one support

Services that respond to individuals' needs, with knowledge of their unique experiences, are more effective. The Plan urges the adoption of two key strategies: resource variety and one-on-one support.

Resource variety

Systems that provide an array of resources and housing options tend to be more successful at helping individuals access housing that meets their needs. For example, individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders need housing options with onsite or readily accessible psychological and mental health support in addition to substance use rehabilitation.⁴⁷ Additionally, the availability of housing options that allow for households with different family structures and cultural backgrounds helps specific populations (e.g., young parents, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, undocumented immigrants, etc.) gain initial access, leading to better long-term outcomes.⁴⁸

One-on-one support

One-on-one support is another important component to encourage individuals' success in the homeless response system. One-on-one support can include peer-support models and case management. Throughout Washington, well-funded case management has proven to reduce returns to homelessness, and recidivism for previously incarcerated individuals who experience homelessness.⁴⁹ Alternatively, hiring peer support to work with people experiencing homelessness and housing instability provides employment opportunities for individuals with lived experience of homelessness, allowing those who are closest to the system processes and current realities to help one another in accessing resources they need to thrive.⁵⁰ Taken together, focus on cultivating strong case management practices and hiring people with lived experience provides the necessary supports and positive relationships to help people experiencing homelessness progress towards their housing goals.

The strategies of Resource variety and One-on-one support inform the following objectives and actions:

- **Objective 2** emphasizes one-on-one supports through strengthening the homeless service provider workforce.
- **Objective 3** seeks to prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible, and includes actions centered on flexibility in funding. Over the next five years, Commerce will seek authority and funding to provide direct cash assistance that permits households to flexibly cover expenses and prevent an episode of homelessness.
- **Objective 5**, house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs, focuses on resource variety: direct cash assistance, temporary safe spaces and emergency housing, providing technical assistance, and developing additional permanent housing options.

⁴⁷ (S. Foster 2010)

⁴⁸ (L. Chao 2024)

⁴⁹ (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

⁵⁰ (William D. Ruckelshaus Center 2023)

Strategies for long-term stability: permanent housing

The most immediate strategies a crisis response system can employ to encourage stability are ensuring equity and meeting individuals' needs.⁵¹ However, the factor that has most achieved long-term stability and prevented chronic homelessness is the level of investment in permanent housing. Individuals gaining access to permanent, affordable housing (either typical or supportive, depending on context) are significantly less likely to return to homelessness than those in shelter or transitional housing.⁵²

To achieve long-term stability through permanent housing placements, local zoning ordinances must ensure land capacity for sufficient affordable housing. Local efforts across Washington will need to encourage more affordable units and a wider variety of housing options across the income spectrum, particularly for lower income levels.

To create a focus on long-term stability, the Plan:

- **Objective 2** emphasizes culturally competent case management that progressively engages with households to establish and sustain long-term tenure in housing.
- **Objective 3** highlights prevention of new episodes of homelessness as a primary objective, including actions targeted at building up the state housing stock across income levels.
- **Objective 3** contains actions to bolster referrals from institutional settings and medical respites to permanent housing.
- **Objective 5** describes legislative proposals to scale funding sources for the construction of additional permanent affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness.
- **Objective 5** identifies ongoing work with local government zoning updates that reduce restrictions on emergency and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness.

⁵¹ (J. Karabanow 2023); (J. Tsai 2023)

⁵² (J. Karabanow 2023)

Implementation plan

Key populations and geographies

An important part of the implementation plan is that within each of the five objectives and 26 actions, different sub-strategies will guide services to different populations. For people experiencing homelessness, there is a wide variety of experiences. Depending on an individual's race, sexual orientation, gender identity, geographic location, ability, age and experience, their individualized needs will vary substantially. Commerce intends to work alongside community partners and people who have experienced homelessness and housing instability to ensure that services and programs meet the individualized needs of people living in diverse communities in Washington.

Racial and ethnic minorities

In Washington, Native American and Black households, as well as immigrants, experience homelessness at disproportionately high rates. For each population there are different historical contexts that contributed to the current housing disparities. The history of Native American removals to reservations in Washington, the Indian Relocation Act, and redlining all drastically affected the present housing status of many Native American and Black households. It is critical to engage with and learn about each racial group's distinct history to design programs and strategies that will address those contexts.

Sexual and gender identities

People under the LGBTQIA2S+ umbrella also experience disproportionate rates of homelessness. This has a strong overlap and intersectional relationship with youth homelessness, where many unaccompanied youth and young adults leave or are kicked out of their homes because of their identity. Homeless services need to be tailored to LGBTQIA2S+ experiences, to make sure they can access the programs available.

Mental and physical disabilities

Another important context to take into account is the ability of individuals experiencing homelessness. Many people with both mental and physical health disabilities experience homelessness in Washington and oftentimes, but not always, this can require assistance with more than just housing costs. People who struggle to perform activities of daily living need more supportive housing and programs than their peers do.

Survivors of sexual and domestic violence

Individuals and households who enter homelessness for reasons of sexual and domestic violence also have unique needs. These households experiencing homelessness frequently need access to higher levels of anonymity and security, with other variations in the time and capacity it takes to establish independence.

Geographic differences

It is also important to note the wide variation in experiences between people experiencing homelessness in urban, suburban and rural settings. The systems of care in rural settings tend to have less capacity and fewer resources, meaning special care is necessary to make sure individuals accessing services are receiving what they need.

System goals

Homeless crisis response systems continue to respond to the immediacy and urgency of homelessness to help ensure everyone has swift and equitable access to stable housing that meets their needs.

Table 14: Washington Balance of State homeless system performance goals

Intervention type	Performance measure	Performance target
Drop-In Emergency Shelter	Increase Exits to Positive Outcomes	Target: 50%
Emergency Shelter	Increase Exits to Permanent Housing	Target: 50%
Transitional Housing	Increase Exits to Permanent Housing	Target: 80%
Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)	Increase Exits to Permanent Housing	Target: 80%
Permanent Supportive Housing and all Permanent Housing, except RRH	Increase Exits to or Retention of Permanent (Supportive) Housing	Target: 95%
All interventions above	Equitable Outcomes	Outcomes across racial and ethnic demographics should not be significantly less than the overall rate

These performance targets are incorporated in the Consolidated Homeless Grant⁵³ contracts with 34 of Washington's 39 counties, which belong to the Balance of State Continuum of Care. The other five counties operate distinct CoCs and monitor system performance metrics based on local planning processes and agreements with federal funders. Commerce continues to work with grantees to improve data quality and establish performance benchmarks for youth and young adult homelessness prevention and housing assistance grants. For the recently established AHAAH program, Commerce is working with the DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division to establish performance metrics.

Implementation plan actions, measures and timelines

The following tables include actions Commerce will take with measures of success and timelines that support reaching each of the Plan's objectives. Commerce will expand and refine the high-level implementation plan as needed in partnership with the State Advisory Council on Homelessness and the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

⁵³ (Washington State Department of Commerce 2024)

Objective 1: Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system

Action	Measure	Timeline
<p>1.1 Commerce will establish, monitor and strengthen equity measures to promote accountability, and provide training and technical assistance to grantees to support compliance.</p>	<p>1.1.1. Commerce will monitor Consolidated Homeless Grant/System Demonstration Grant racial equity performance measures and provide technical assistance to grantees who are out of compliance.</p> <p>1.1.2. Commerce will create a digital resource hub for technical assistance and training materials related to promoting racial equity in homeless services systems</p> <p>1.1.3. Commerce will establish racial equity performance measures for the Apple Health & Homes Initiative.</p>	<p>1.1.1. Annually starting July 2026</p> <p>1.1.2. July 2025</p> <p>1.1.3. 2024-2029</p>
<p>1.2. Commerce will provide training and technical assistance on homeless system performance improvement strategies, and, when necessary, develop plans for grantees who are not meeting performance requirements.</p>	<p>1.2.1. Commerce will monitor the Consolidated Homeless Grant/System Demonstration Grant homeless system performance measures and provide technical assistance to grantees who are out of compliance.</p> <p>1.2.2. Commerce will create a digital resource hub for technical assistance and training materials related to promoting homeless system performance.</p> <p>1.2.3. Commerce will establish a dedicated quality assurance team for youth and young adult homelessness and prevention grants.</p>	<p>1.2.1. 2026, then annually</p> <p>1.2.2. 2025</p> <p>1.2.3. 2024 and ongoing</p>
<p>1.3. Through paid participation on boards, advisory committees, focus groups, interviews, and other collaborative co-creative activities, Commerce will incorporate lived experience of homelessness or housing instability in activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Program design and evaluation ○ Funding allocation decision-making ○ Policy formulation 	<p>1.3.1. Commerce will establish and support a homelessness Lived Experience Advisory Committee.</p> <p>1.3.2. Commerce will hire staff to support engagement with youth and young adults with lived experience who can inform and collaborate on the Office of Homeless Youth's programmatic and policy work.</p> <p>1.3.3. Commerce will work with the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Advisory Committee to develop and implement recommendations that strengthen and scale PSH statewide.</p>	<p>1.3.1. 2024 and ongoing</p> <p>1.3.2. Ongoing</p> <p>1.3.3. 2024 – 2027</p>
<p>1.4. Commerce will continue to innovate in the publication and dissemination of public reports of homeless system performance, estimates of unmet need, and portfolios of homeless service program and housing capital investments.</p>	<p>1.4.1. Commerce will publish the annual WA State Homeless System County Report Card and quarterly performance dashboards.</p> <p>1.4.2. Commerce will publish the semi-annual Snapshot of Homelessness Report.</p> <p>1.4.3. Commerce will publish the annual Homeless Housing Project Expenditure Report.</p> <p>1.4.4. Commerce will publish an annual Capital Housing Investments Report.</p> <p>1.4.5. Commerce will publish the annual Apple Health and Homes Report.</p> <p>1.4.6. Commerce will publish the annual PSH Advisory Committee Report.</p>	<p>1.4.1. Ongoing</p> <p>1.4.2. Ongoing</p> <p>1.4.3. Ongoing</p> <p>1.4.4. July 2025</p> <p>1.4.5. Annually through 2027</p> <p>1.4.6. Ongoing</p>

Objective 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce

Action	Measure	Timeline
2.1. Commerce will advocate for an inflation-adjusted funding source that would provide predictable funds for homelessness assistance programs and for dedicated cost of living increases for staff.	2.1.1. Commerce will develop legislative proposals that address the impacts of inflation and unpredictability of funding sources for homeless housing and assistance grants.	2.1.1. 2025
2.2. Commerce will provide training on homeless service provision core competencies, including training on culturally competent case management that progressively engages with households from first contact to post-exit, addresses acute needs and supports long-term stability.	2.2.1. Commerce will develop and review biennial training plans 2.2.2. Commerce will require homeless housing and assistance grant recipients comply with training requirements 2.2.3. Working with the PSH Advisory Committee, Commerce will develop and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement program on the fidelity of the SAMHSA evidence-based practice PSH	2.2.1. Annually 2.2.2. 2024-2025, ongoing 2.2.3. 2024-2029
2.3. Commerce will seek additional funding, develop onboarding, and provide training and technical assistance to build capacity, reduce administrative burden and strengthen the effectiveness of by-and-for organizations as well as organizations serving rural communities.	2.3.1. Commerce will identify available funding, seek additional funding as necessary, and distribute funds to build capacity of by-and-for organizations and rural service provider organizations 2.3.2. Commerce will engage in discussions with both by-and-for organizations and rural communities to understand capacity constraints and program administration needs. 2.3.3. Commerce may revise contract management practices to support and strengthen service provision through by-and-for organizations and providers serving rural communities.	2.3.1. 2025-2027 2.3.2. 2027-2029 2.3.3. 2024-2029
2.4. Commerce will explore accreditation and certification requirements for direct service providers and supervisors to support high-quality trauma-informed, person-centered and culturally competent services.	2.4.1. Commerce will conduct a study to assess the impacts of accreditation and certification requirements.	2.4.1. 2027-2029
2.5. Commerce will promote the creation of more career paths for people with lived experience of homelessness and housing instability to lead efforts in the prevention and ending of homelessness.	2.5.1. Commerce will collect data on the agency's applications received and hires of candidates who have lived experience of homelessness. 2.5.2. Commerce will hire staff to support engagement with youth and young adult lived experts to support their professional development through involvement in the Office of Homeless Youth's policy and programmatic work.	2.5.1. Ongoing 2.5.2. 2025, ongoing

Objective 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible

Action	Measure	Timeline
<p>3.1. Working with partners, Commerce will support accessible local coordinated entry processes and connections to public benefits for populations exiting institutional living situations (i.e., jails, prisons, foster care, Juvenile Rehabilitation, etc.).</p>	<p>3.1.1. Commerce will monitor coordinated entry processes in the Balance of State CoC for accessibility and provide training and technical assistance.</p>	<p>3.1.1. Ongoing</p> <p>3.1.2. 2025, ongoing</p> <p>3.1.3. 2025-2027</p> <p>3.1.4. Ongoing</p>
	<p>3.1.2. Commerce will host annual Washington State Health Care Authority and the Dept. of Social and Health Services training to Consolidated Homeless Grant and System Demonstration Grant grantees on public benefits.</p>	
	<p>3.1.3. Commerce will establish protocols with the Health Care Authority and distribute them to local jurisdictions to support establishing Medicaid benefits for incarcerated individuals prior to their release.</p>	
	<p>3.1.4. Commerce will provide training to communities on how to implement the Youth and Young Adult coordinated prioritization tool.</p>	
<p>3.2. Commerce will support restrictions on large, abrupt rent increases, giving tenants time to obtain assistance or find more affordable housing options.</p>	<p>3.2.1. Commerce will provide education on the rising rent increases and the correlation with increasing rates of homelessness.</p>	<p>3.2.1. 2025</p>
<p>3.3. In partnership with the Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA), Commerce will continue to coordinate efforts to strengthen connections between homeless crisis response systems, free civil legal assistance, and dispute resolution services to resolve landlord/tenant conflicts and preserve tenancies.</p>	<p>3.3.1. Commerce will host annual OCLA trainings for Consolidated Homeless Grant and System Demonstration Grant grantees.</p>	<p>3.3.1. 2024-2029</p>
	<p>3.3.2. Commerce will host annual dispute resolution services trainings for Consolidated Homeless Grant and System Demonstration Grant grantees.</p>	<p>3.3.2. 2024-2029</p>
<p>3.4. Commerce will scale and strengthen youth homelessness prevention programs.</p>	<p>3.4.1. Continue to support the steering committee of lived experts to lead the state's Youth and Young Adult (YYA) homelessness strategic efforts.</p>	<p>3.4.1. Ongoing</p>
	<p>3.4.2. Co-lead and convene the YYA homelessness coordinating body with state and private partners.</p>	<p>3.4.2. Ongoing</p>
	<p>3.4.3. Continue to support a community of practice for providers to implement YYA homelessness prevention interventions.</p>	<p>3.4.3. Ongoing</p>
	<p>3.4.4. Submit legislative proposals that scale diversion programs to prevent or end YYA homelessness.</p>	<p>3.4.4. 2025, ongoing</p>
<p>3.5. Commerce will seek authority to implement direct cash transfers to prevent episodes of homelessness.</p>	<p>3.5.1. Commerce will develop agency request legislation making cash assistance to homeless and at risk households an allowable expense in the Consolidated Homeless Grant and System Demonstration Grants.</p>	<p>3.5.1. 2025</p>
	<p>3.5.2. Commerce will develop legislative proposals that would allow and fund a direct cash assistance pilot program for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness or housing instability.</p>	<p>3.5.2. 2024, ongoing</p>

Objective 4: Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and greatest risk of harm

Action	Measure	Timeline
<p>4.1. Commerce will create and make available a standardized and equitable Coordinated Entry (CE) prioritization tool in partnership with the Balance of State (BoS) Continuum of Care (CoC), local governments, nonprofit stakeholders, and partners with lived experience of homelessness.</p>	<p>4.1.1. Commerce will make BoS CE prioritization tool available to pilot communities.</p>	<p>4.1.1. 2026</p>
	<p>4.1.2. Commerce will conduct an equity analysis on the BoS CE prioritization tool use in pilot communities.</p>	<p>4.1.2. 2028</p>
	<p>4.1.3. Commerce will make the BoS CE prioritization tool available in BoS CoC Homeless Management Information System.</p>	<p>4.1.3. 2028</p>
<p>4.2. Commerce will improve alignment between the encampment resolution program, state Coordinated Entry (CE) prioritization criteria, HUD CE guidelines and US Interagency Council on Homelessness guidance on encampments to support housing placements for those displaced from unauthorized encampments.</p>	<p>4.2.1. Commerce will publish guidance for CE systems statewide on how to align encampment resolution efforts with local coordinated entry processes.</p>	<p>4.2.1. 2025</p>
<p>4.3. Commerce will work to address critical service gaps identified in "Yes to Yes- Washington State: Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Landscape Scan."</p>	<p>4.3.1. Commerce will annually report progress made towards filling identified critical service gaps as part of annual legislative reports.</p>	<p>4.3.1. 2025-2029</p>

Objective 5: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

Action	Measure	Timeline
<p>5.1. Commerce will pursue additional federal and state funding necessary to achieve the 20-year state permanent housing targets for households at all income levels through a combination of capital investments, services, and operating subsidies.</p>	<p>5.1.1. Commerce will develop legislative proposals that would request state funding necessary to make progress towards the 20-year state permanent housing targets for households at all income levels.</p>	<p>5.1.1. 2024, annually thereafter</p>
	<p>5.1.2. Commerce will submit applications in response to federal Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) that would increase temporary or permanent housing inventory</p>	<p>5.1.2. As NOFOs are released</p>
<p>5.2. To meet the 20-year state targets required under RCW 36.70A.070 for 91,357 additional emergency housing beds to provide immediate access to a place to live for anyone living outside, Commerce will pursue federal and state funding at scale for non-congregate temporary housing, preferably in forms that can be converted to permanent affordable housing when the need for temporary housing subsides.⁵⁴</p>	<p>5.2.1. Commerce will develop legislative proposals that would request state funding necessary to make progress towards the 20-year state emergency housing bed capacity goal.</p>	<p>5.2.1. 2024, annually thereafter</p>
<p>5.3. Commerce will explore opportunities to expedite the lease-up process such as using Medicaid eligibility instead of unearned income verification.</p>	<p>5.3.1. Commerce will prioritize this issue as part of the HUD/HHS Accelerator Program.</p>	<p>5.3.1. 2024-2025</p>

⁵⁴ The Washington Legislature passed Chapter 47, Laws of 2023 (SB 5553), which directs the State Building Code Council to adopt standards for temporary emergency shelters and make them available for local adoption. Adopting these state building code standards may assist local governments with their building code questions for unique shelter accommodations.

Action	Measure	Timeline
<p>5.4. Commerce will bolster access to housing choice vouchers (HCVs) by advocating for additional Congressional appropriations, and partner with the Association of Washington Housing Authorities to promote HCV access for homeless households.</p>	<p>5.4.1. Commerce will prepare and publish needs estimates for vouchers to subsidize units as part of achieving the 20-year state housing targets for subsidized housing, and identify opportunities for additional federal investment.</p>	<p>5.4.1. 2025</p>
<p>5.5. Commerce will provide training and technical assistance to recipients of the Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) or the System Demonstration Grant (SDG) to support compliance with the low barrier requirement.</p>	<p>5.5.1. 80% of CHG/SDG-funded projects will meet low-barrier standards.</p>	<p>5.5.1. 2024-2025, ongoing</p>
<p>5.6. In partnership with the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) and the Dept. of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Commerce will work to expand access to supportive services that address the immediate and long-term needs of people with barriers to living independently including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Medical respite ○ Medicaid enrollment ○ Crisis intervention supports ○ Assistance with activities of daily living 	<p>5.6.1. Commerce will implement the Apple Health & Homes Initiative and leverage Medicaid-funded Foundational Community Support services.</p>	<p>5.6.1. Ongoing</p>
<p>5.7. Commerce will provide technical assistance to local governments to help them plan for and accommodate their portion of projected housing needs for all income groups.</p>	<p>5.7.1. Local jurisdictions will plan adequate land capacity for all housing needs, guard against displacement, make adequate provisions for low-income housing, and adopt local ordinances to allow shelters, transitional housing, emergency housing, and permanent supportive housing.</p>	<p>5.7.1. 2024-2027</p>
<p>5.8. Commerce will use the information gained from the Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program evaluation to strengthen and improve the program.</p>	<p>5.8.1. Commerce will develop and implement an action plan based on recommendations and findings in the final report of the HEN program evaluation.</p>	<p>5.8.1. 2025-2027</p>
<p>5.9. In partnership with other state agencies, Commerce will advocate for funding to establish grants to local governments solely for temporary safe spaces that provide a place to sleep, hygiene, and/or supportive services to people currently living in places not meant for human habitation.</p>	<p>5.9.1. Commerce will develop legislative proposals that would request state funds to implement a program for temporary safe spaces and assistance with immediate needs while better emergency and permanent housing options are being developed.</p>	<p>5.9.1. 2024-2029</p>

Appendix A: Development process

Table 11: Summary of the development process and stakeholder engagement:

Timeline	Activity
December 2023 - January 2024	Analysis of the Ruckelshaus Center's Pathways to Housing Security Report
January 2024	<p>Internal engagements were held with Commerce teams across divisions to analyze the Pathways to Housing Security Report and develop possible actions for Commerce.</p> <p>Presentations to county homeless crisis response administrators, Balance of State CoC, and the joint meeting of the State Advisory Council on Homelessness and the Interagency Council on Homelessness.</p>
February -March 2024	<p>External engagements were held to discuss priority actions and community needs with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Washington community action agencies ○ The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance Resident Action Project members (people with lived experience of homelessness) ○ Tribal representatives in partnership with Commerce's Office of Tribal Relations ○ The Commerce Youth 4 Youth Board (people with lived experience of homelessness) ○ Service providers and advocates for people fleeing domestic violence and sexual assault
April 2024	<p>Presentations to the Balance of State Continuum of Care Steering Committee, the State Permanent Supportive Housing Advisory Committee, the State Advisory Council on Homelessness, the Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the State Affordable Housing Advisory Board.</p> <p>Meetings were held with representatives of county governments administering homeless crisis responses to discuss areas of needs and priorities for both the state plan and the accompanying local plan guidance.</p> <p>Thematic analysis of qualitative data from the February and March engagements that produce a list of major themes to include in the implementation plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cultural competency ○ Community building ○ Administrative barriers ○ Circumstantial barriers ○ Equity goals ○ Holistic assistance ○ Inter-agency collaboration ○ Local collaboration ○ Long-term follow-up ○ Organizational capacity ○ Population-specific needs ○ Preventative assistance ○ Staff retention and training ○ Technical assistance ○ Transparency ○ Collaboration with people with homelessness experience
May - June 2024	<p>The draft Plan release was announced on Commerce's website, Commerce's GovDelivery mass email lists, direct emails to our March workshop participants, and through Commerce's social media channels.</p> <p>Public comments were collected from May 1 to June 7.</p> <p>Commerce presented to the Washington State Association of Counties Virtual Assembly.</p> <p>Two public listening sessions were held to collect feedback on the draft plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May 13 ○ June 3
June - August 2024	The public comment period closed June 7.

Timeline	Activity
	<p>Commerce held a special language access public comment period from July 25 to August 8, offering written public comment opportunities in nine languages: English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Amharic, Lingala, Tigrinya, and Somali.</p> <p>After the public comment period closed, we analyzed 239 pieces of feedback from residents of 29 of 39 counties in Washington. The feedback identified areas for improvement or change, and we finalized the plan by August for submission through the agency's internal review and approval process.</p> <p>The thematic analysis of public comments resulted in the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Including affordable housing action for housing above 30% AMI levels in the prevention objective ○ Calling out the specific needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault ○ Supporting encampment communities as safe spaces for people who are awaiting housing ○ Calling out the expansion of voucher programs ○ Hiring more people with lived experience to implement programs ○ Adding a mention of diversion and Commerce's collaboration with the Office of Civil Legal Aid ○ Increasing support for rural communities ○ Increasing support for By and For organizations ○ Mentioning overburdened populations such as those who have been displaced and Native populations
September 2024	Commerce will publish the final plan and local plan guidance in September 2024.
December 2025	Local homeless housing plans for 2025-2030 are due to Commerce by December 2025.

Appendix B: Glossary

Aftercare: Long-term follow-up with families and individuals after they have been housed to ensure their stability and prevent returns to homelessness

Aged, blind, and disabled program (ABD): A state level direct cash assistance program administered by the Department of Social and Health Services for individuals (and their families) with long-term medical conditions, blindness, or are age 65 or older.⁵⁵

Apple Health and Homes Initiative: is a multi-agency effort that pairs healthcare services with housing resources for some of the state’s most vulnerable residents.⁵⁶

By and For: A By and For organization is a part of a community of people that see themselves as unique and defined by the members’ identities, traditions, and values. A By and For organization is one where leadership and staff belong to the same community they serve, promote, and work to preserve. By and For organizations build trust, advocate, respond, and solve problems specific to community members. By and For organizations have roots in their respective communities as change agents and providers of mitigating systems of community service. They invest in and work with community members to improve their quality of life.⁵⁷

Capacity building: An investment in the effectiveness and sustainability of an organization or program for it to effectively deliver on its mission.⁵⁸

Continuum of care (CoC): The group organized to carry out the responsibilities of a program designed to promote a community-wide commitment to ending homelessness for a defined geographic area.⁵⁹

Continuum of care, Balance of State: The continuum of care that is organized to provide leadership and coordination in activities throughout a 34-county jurisdiction (all but the five largest counties in Washington) toward ending homelessness and working to prevent the occurrence of homelessness within the area.⁶⁰

Coordinated entry: The process through which people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness can access the crisis response system in a streamlined way through assessments and quickly connected to appropriate and tailored housing and services within their community.⁶¹

County: A regional mode of governance, counties are tasked with carrying out laws and rules from the state legislature, tracking public records, providing health resources, maintaining roads and providing law enforcement to the unincorporated lands within their boundaries and collaborating with the incorporated cities and towns.⁶²

County, frontier: means a county with a population density of fewer than 50 people per square mile.⁶³

⁵⁵ (Washington Department of Health and Human Services n.d.)

⁵⁶ (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

⁵⁷ (Washington State Department of Commerce 2023)

⁵⁸ (National Council on Nonprofits n.d.)

⁵⁹ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development n.d.)

⁶⁰ (Washington State Department of Commerce n.d.)

⁶¹ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development n.d.)

⁶² (Washington State Association of Counties n.d.)

⁶³ (Washington State Legislature 2024)

County, rural: A county with a population density of fewer than 100 people per square mile or a county small than 225 square miles.⁶⁴

County, urban: A county with a population density of more than 100 people per square mile.

Homeless crisis response: A system consisting of a continuum of services designed to identify individuals and families experiencing homelessness, meet their immediate needs for shelter and services, and ultimately re-house each household.⁶⁵

Homeless management information system (HMIS): A local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to individuals and families at risk of and experiencing homelessness.⁶⁶

Housing, affordable: Residential housing that is rented by a person or household whose monthly housing costs, including utilities other than telephone, do not exceed thirty percent of the household's monthly income for households who make at or below 60 percent of the area median income.⁶⁷

Housing, permanent supportive (PSH): subsidized, leased housing with no limit on length of stay that prioritizes people who need comprehensive support services to retain tenancy and uses admissions practices designed to use lower barriers to entry than would be typical for other subsidized or unsubsidized rental housing, especially related to rental history, criminal history, and personal behaviors. Permanent supportive housing is paired with on-site or off-site voluntary services designed to support a person living with a complex and disabling behavioral health or physical health condition who was experiencing homelessness or was at imminent risk of homelessness. The aim is to help the resident retain their housing and succeed as a tenant. Additionally, it aims to improve the resident's health status and connect them with community-based health care, treatment, or employment services.⁶⁸

Housing and Essential Needs program (HEN): A program that provides access to essential needs items and potential rental assistance for low-income individuals who are unable to work for at least 90 days due to a physical and/or mental incapacity.⁶⁹

Housing and Urban Development, Department of (HUD): The U.S. federal department in charge of national-level housing and homelessness programs and funding.⁷⁰

Housing authority: Any public corporations created in cities and counties as part of RCW 35.82.030. Housing authorities are responsible for issuing housing choice vouchers and/or providing public housing units.⁷¹

Housing choice voucher: A cash assistance voucher that allows for very low-income families to choose and lease or purchase safe, decent, and affordable privately owned rental housing.⁷²

⁶⁴ (Washington State Legislature 2024)

⁶⁵ (County of San Mateo California n.d.)

⁶⁶ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development n.d.)

⁶⁷ (Washington State Legislature 2007)

⁶⁸ (Washington State Legislature 1994)

⁶⁹ (Washington State Department of Health and Human Services n.d.)

⁷⁰ (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development n.d.)

⁷¹ (Washington State Legislature n.d.)

⁷² (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development n.d.)

LGBTQIA2S+: Acronym used to refer to the larger queer community, which stands for: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, two-spirit, and beyond.

Local government: A town, city, code city, or county government in the state of Washington.⁷³

Marginalized: Relegated to a marginal position within a society or group.⁷⁴

Medical respite: Acute and post-acute care for people experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from a physical illness or injury on the streets but are not ill enough to be in a hospital.⁷⁵

Social exclusion: The societal social, economic, political, and cultural exclusion from systems that determine the social integration of a person in society.⁷⁶

State fiscal year, SFY: The fiscal year in Washington, around which budgeting occurs, runs from July 1 through June 30.⁷⁷

Supportive leasing, global leasing, master leasing: A type of lease that gives the lessee the right to control and sublease the property during the lease, while the owner retains the legal title. In many cases, a housing authority or service provider takes on the role of the lessee and to sublease a unit to an individual experiencing homelessness or housing instability.⁷⁸

Technical assistance (TA): The process of providing targeted support to an organization with a development need or problem.⁷⁹

YYA: Acronym for “Youth and Young Adults”, individuals between the ages of 14 and 24.

⁷³ (Municipal Research and Services Center 2009)

⁷⁴ (Merriam-Webster n.d.)

⁷⁵ (National Healthcare for the Homeless Council n.d.)

⁷⁶ (Oxford Reference n.d.)

⁷⁷ (Municipal Research and Services Center n.d.)

⁷⁸ (National Alliance to End Homelessness n.d.)

⁷⁹ (Centers for Disease Control n.d.)

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