

Recommendations from May/June Stakeholder Conversations and Follow-Up Survey Monkey

Introductory Note: Seven in-person two-hour small group meetings (including one meeting for consumers only) were held over a three-day period from May 13-15, 2013, engaging 51 active stakeholders. In addition, 15 telephone interviews were conducted with formerly or less active stakeholders, and another seven interviews were conducted with active stakeholders who were unable to attend the in-person meetings. A follow-up Survey Monkey was sent to participants at the in-person meetings to solicit additional thoughts about some of the topics discussed, including choice of one of two approaches to evolving the Chicago CoC; 27 participants completed the survey. Meetings and interviews were facilitated by staff from The Collaborative Partnership (National Center on Family Homelessness, HomeBase), with support from staff from TDA, funded through a contract with HUD.

The recommendations in this document were prepared by staff from The Collaborative Partnership. The content of this document reflects our overall sense of the stakeholder conversations and follow-up feedback. Although with each recommendation we cite one or more issues/concerns addressed, the fact is that on just about every question, there was at least one stakeholder who saw things differently. In matters where there seemed to be general agreement, our recommendations reflect the general consensus. In other cases, the conversations did not point to a clear "solution," or suggested the need for clarification of relevant policies and procedures, and our recommendations call for such clarification. Interested readers are referred to the notes and transcripts from the meetings for greater detail.

Recommendation	Issues Addressed
(1) Adopt the guiding principles developed by the Steering Committee on Structure and Governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were broadly supported at meetings and according to Survey Monkey responses.
(2) The CoC should be a separate entity from the Alliance, with a separate governing body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear consensus at meetings and according to Survey Monkey responses.
(3) The CoC should be a membership-based organization whose membership and governing board reflect the broad diversity of stakeholder interests identified in HUD's CoC Interim Rule. In particular, every effort should be made to include and acknowledge the value of small, non-HUD-funded providers, members of the faith community, cooperating housing providers and landlords, cooperating businesses and employers, and stakeholders contributing to efforts to address homelessness from the diversity of Chicago neighborhoods and community groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with HUD requirements, Fall 2012 Survey Monkey responses, sense of meetings, Plan 2.0 approach • During meeting discussions, there was a clear emphasis on including the specifically listed constituencies, and for recognizing the different needs and provider communities of different neighborhoods in Chicago
(4) The focus of the CoC and its governing board should be preventing and ending homelessness in Chicago; that is, although the CoC and its committees must be capable of complying with the requirements set forth in HUD's CoC Interim Rule, the scope of its work must not be limited to applying for and managing HUD funding, and its structure and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The broader focus is consistent with Plan 2.0 and with HUD's oft-stated expectation that CoCs have a broader focus than the pursuit of HUD funding. • Bullet (a) specifically addresses the perceived marginalization of providers that either lost or felt discouraged from applying for HUD

<p>governance must be broadly enough defined to support the larger mission of addressing homelessness in Chicago, as articulated, for example, in Plan 2.0. Given that broader role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To the extent that valuable services cannot be funded under the ESG or CoC programs, the Continuum should support efforts to leverage other funds to sustain such services. (b) The CoC should develop a plan for keeping members informed about local and statewide policy and funding debates/discussions whose outcome is likely to significantly impact homelessness and persons who are homeless in Chicago. Examples of topic areas that came up in conversations included (i) the supply/loss/funding of affordable housing; (ii) residential options and related supports for persons leaving incarceration or treatment; (iii) employment/workforce development; and (iv) efforts to support educational attainment by children in unstable living situations. (c) The CoC should consider developing a strategy for participating in the kind of policy and funding discussions described in the previous bullet, where such participation could advance overall efforts to prevent and/or end homelessness in Chicago. 	<p>funding, and providers whose proposed projects were not included in the annual application, because they were not deemed high enough priorities, or because their focus was seen as inconsistent with HUD priorities. We heard numerous statements about smaller, community and faith-based providers feeling as though their work is not valued by the CoC, and citing decisions to de-prioritize their projects for HUD funding as evidence of that lack of perceived value. We heard that if HUD funding is the primary basis for having a role in the CoC, then the CoC could not expect to attract the participation of these providers, and that, in fact, the loss of HUD funding, and the inability to replace that funding would deprive the Continuum of important resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of stakeholders described a need for an entity that will lead or coordinate advocacy for public policy or funding and/or keep members informed about relevant public discussions, given the evolution of the Alliance's role in the CoC, and given changes at the Coalition for the Homeless. There was particular mention of the need for a more public presence in policy and funding discussions about affordable housing. Bullets (b) and (c) address those concerns.
<p>(5) Improved communication at all levels of the CoC would improve the actual (and perceived) quality of inclusion and participation, and the level (and perception) of transparency and accountability. Key elements of a strategy to improve CoC communication should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Provisions for timely/regular dissemination of information about all upcoming meetings (of the whole CoC, the CoC governing board, CoC committees, and CoC constituency groups), including the meeting agenda and any decisions that will be made at those meetings, and timely dissemination of minutes and information about any decisions that have been made at such meetings. Appropriate dissemination would include posting on online bulletin boards and in prominent and predictable places on the website of the CoC (or Collaborative Applicant), and via email to all stakeholders that have furnished such contact information for the purpose of such notification. (b) Provisions for timely dissemination of information about pending decisions to stakeholders who may reasonably be expected to have an opinion or be impacted by the outcome. To the extent that committee members represent larger constituencies, timeliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for better communications was a key topic of many of the discussions, and was seen as a lynchpin in a more inclusive, transparent, accountable, and effective CoC. • Bullets (a), (b), and (c) address concerns about inadequate notice and information about meetings and decisions, and inconsistent posting of minutes and information about decisions. Bullet (a) addresses the need for such information to be available in predictable locations, so that persons who have not requested the information, but who want to be able to find it, know where to look. • Bullets (b) and (c) specifically address the desire to help committee members adequately prepare for important votes, by ensuring that they are provided with relevant information, including context and pros and cons, and by ensuring that there is adequate time for dialogue with constituents that the committee members represent. There were a number of statements about how providers with the resources to send staff to multiple meetings are better prepared for certain votes than smaller providers and consumers, and how the quality of decision making and representation would improve if more

<p>means that these members have adequate time to disseminate information to their constituencies, hear back from those constituencies, and engage in necessary dialogue.</p> <p>(c) To ensure that committee members have adequate information upon which to base their votes on more complex matters, a reasonable effort should be made to provide one or more timely briefings about pending proposals, including the pros and cons of the proposals, possible alternatives, and consequences of action/inaction.</p> <p>(d) It should be the expectation that committee members who attend meetings as representatives of stakeholder constituencies will forward information to those constituencies about upcoming meetings and pending and executed decisions, so that their constituent stakeholders have the opportunity to provide timely feedback and are aware of important committee actions.</p> <p>(e) The frequency of emergency decision making—i.e., decisions that have to be made without timely notification and information—should be kept to an absolute minimum, and the reason for holding any such emergency meeting or vote should be clearly articulated. [Note: Although it didn't specifically come up in the stakeholder discussions, respondents to the Fall 2012 Survey Monkey indicated that there are some instances when it may make sense to require supermajority approval for some decisions. Perhaps the decision to take a vote on a matter that stakeholders have not had the customary opportunity to consider and discuss is the type of decision that should require a supermajority.]</p> <p>(f) The CoC should explore various options for making its meetings more accessible. Such strategies might include: allowing stakeholders to listen in by phone, allowing committee members to participate by phone, providing consumer members with assistance with transportation, and minimizing the use of jargon / unexplained acronyms / abbreviations, etc. The CoC should explore the viability of using community access cable or other mechanisms to broadcast and record meetings of its governing body, and making such recordings available as podcasts that can be downloaded from the same website where the meeting notices/minutes are posted.</p>	<p>attention were paid to ensuring that all parties are properly informed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullet (d) addresses the concern about uneven efforts by committee members to inform and solicit input from their constituencies. Bullets (b) and (c) ensure that they have the necessary information and time to have those conversations. • Bullet (e) addresses a concern that there have been too many instances of emergency decisions, and decisions which didn't allow for adequate time to discuss and solicit feedback about the proposals. • Bullet (f) addresses concern about how the logistics -- especially time or timing or the cost/time of travel -- of attending meetings and the lack of familiarity with the jargon / acronyms end up interfering with the ability of some stakeholders to participate.
<p>(6) The meaning of CoC membership should be defined. Membership should</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given HUD's requirement that the CoC be a membership-based

<p>include the opportunity to receive timely information about CoC meetings and decisions, as described above; should include the opportunity to attend and suggest agenda items for any CoC planning meetings (although active participation at some committee meetings may be limited to the members of those committees); and should include the opportunity to participate in at least one relevant constituency group. Members might reasonably be expected to embrace the overall goals of preventing and ending homelessness in Chicago, but the CoC should not require adherence to specific housing or service delivery models or approaches. (However, access to HUD or other government funding could require or favor adherence to certain models/approaches.)</p>	<p>organization, there was widespread agreement about the need to define "membership."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with the responses to the follow-up Survey Monkey and discussions at stakeholder meetings, the benefits of membership should, at a minimum, include access to information about meetings and decisions, as noted in recommendation (5), as well as right to attend CoC meetings (perhaps, only as an observer, in the case of meetings of committees with a defined membership). • Keeping in mind statements about the importance of valuing the contributions of diverse providers, and stated concerns about adverse impact of loss of funding on diversity of provider participation in the CoC, the second part of this recommendation addresses the perceived need for a "big tent" for stakeholders with a shared goal of ending homelessness, but without requiring adherence to specific models or approaches to housing/service delivery.
<p>(7) The CoC should develop policies and procedures for constituting and allocating/filling the seats of governing board and the standing and ad-hoc committees that support the work of the CoC. In developing those policies and procedures, the CoC should consider the following recommendations, derived from stakeholder feedback:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) There should be balance in the number of consumers, providers, and other constituencies represented on the governing board. (b) The CoC should consider eliminating or reducing to one the Collaborative Applicant's voting seats on the CoC governing board. (c) The CoC should not significantly increase the number of seats on the governing board above the current 25-30 level, even as the number and diversity of stakeholders are increased. (d) The representation of consumers, providers, public sector agencies, and other constituencies on various CoC committees need not be exactly the same as the proportions on the governing board, but should be based on the subject matter of the committee. <p><i>[Note: This recommendation is primarily derived from feedback in the Follow-Up Survey Monkey. Given constituent sensitivity to issues of inclusion and exclusion, it may be advisable to add the following provision, which was not discussed: To the extent that any such constituency is excluded from the membership of a committee or is represented at a substantially lower level as</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We heard that the Planning Council makes a serious effort to empanel steering committees that include key stakeholders, but we also heard questions about why certain stakeholders are not represented on certain committees, why the same people appear on multiple committees, and other similar questions. This recommendation is based on suggestions about how to create a more transparent process for creating and filling these committees • Bullet (a) reflects what seems to be a general consensus among participating stakeholders and respondents to the follow-up Survey Monkey, although the concept of "balance" will have to be defined as the number of stakeholders increases. • Bullet (b) reflects a frequently stated concern (also reflected in the follow-up Survey Monkey) about whether the Collaborative Applicant should have any seats on the governing board. • Bullet (c) reflects concerns about the size of the governing board, and memories of a dysfunctional over-sized board in the distant past. This was also broadly supported in the follow-up Survey Monkey • Bullet (d) reflects a sense -- supported in the follow-up Survey Monkey -- that committees should not have a one-size-fits-all approach to membership, and that the mix of consumers, providers, etc. should vary based on topic. [We have suggested an additional provision to ensure that significant departures from "balance" are explained.

<p><i>compared to its representation on the governing board, the reason for that decision should be stated by the entity charged with allocating and filling the seats of that committee.]</i></p> <p>(e) To support broader involvement in CoC planning projects and committee work, where possible, an effort should be made to convene shorter-term, as-needed committees, rather than committees requiring long term commitments.</p> <p>Note: <i>These recommendations do not specifically prescribe a mechanism for selecting the governing board. Presumably, the selection of consumers and providers could continue to involve constituency groups, although this should be more carefully thought out, given the goal of adding new constituencies which might not easily fit into umbrella constituency groups.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullet (e) reflects comments about efforts to engage more stakeholders by requiring less of a commitment, where possible.
<p>(8) The CoC should consider selecting the members of the governing board for defined terms, with clear grounds for removal, such as poor attendance at meetings and violations of the conflict of interest policy. but not including disagreement about how the representative voted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were mixed feelings about whether the representatives of constituency groups should vote as a bloc on the governing board, and concerns expressed about members being put in a position of having to vote against their conscience in order to vote with the bloc, out of fear of being removed from their seat. There was also a concern expressed that when a constituency group obligates its representatives to vote as a bloc, that instruction eliminates the possibility of negotiating a compromise solution, and makes discussion of the issue a waste of meeting time. Given the limited schedule of meetings, the inability to negotiate a compromise could force a problematic delay of a time sensitive decision. • The proposed recommendation attempts to preserve the option for constituency groups to instruct their representatives to vote as a bloc, but allows members to vote their conscience without fear of being removed from their seat as a representative. If this recommendation is unsatisfactory, the CoC should pursue another solution to the problem, to minimize the likelihood of irresolvable stalemates with respect to pressing governing body decisions.
<p>(9) There should be some mechanism, possibly including term limits, for encouraging turnover on CoC committees, including the governing board, with the possible exception of seats filled by representatives of public agencies. There should be a policy of cultivating and supporting new leadership and informed consumer participation, for example, by orienting and/or mentoring new committee members so that they are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This recommendation addresses concerns about the need for "new blood." Although progress was cited in bringing new stakeholders into leadership roles, the need for an assertive mechanism for ensuring turnover came up over and over again. • While there was recognition of the value to members sitting on multiple committees, there was also recognition of the value of

<p>able to "catch up" with more seasoned committee members, and by ensuring that orientations or relevant trainings are open to all members of the committee.</p>	<p>involving additional stakeholders on committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the same time, there was recognition that new committee members need support to ensure that they will be comfortable and capable of fulfilling their leadership role, and the second part of the recommendation (orientation/ mentoring / training) reflects some of the strategies identified in the stakeholder meetings.
<p>(10)The CoC should clearly articulate the respective roles and responsibilities of the governing board, of the Executive Committee of that governing board (if one is defined), of all CoC committees, and of the Collaborative Applicant. In delineating these roles and responsibilities, it will be useful to consider examples of the kinds of decisions and actions that would be taken by each body, and if useful, the kinds of decision and actions that are beyond the purview of such body. As part of the delineation of roles and responsibilities, the CoC may also establish a minimum frequency of meetings, based on relevant criteria, including the expected workload and the impact on member participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders repeatedly expressed confusion about who has what responsibility and noted the need for clearly defined responsibilities. In addition to clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of different committees, we also heard a need to clarify the distinction between governance and management-level decisions. Participants had different ideas about the appropriate boundaries for each type of decision. There was interest in working through a sample list of decisions to try to achieve clarity and agreement. The final element of this recommendation is about the frequency of meetings. We heard that the infrequency of every-other-month Planning Council meetings contributed to the need for emergency decisions, and that the three-hour duration was excessive for some participants. There were suggestions for monthly meetings, which may well make sense given the range of decisions that the governing body might need to make, but we have stopped short of including such a prescriptive recommendation here.
<p>(11)The CoC should come up with clear guidelines for determining the level of staffing support that will be provided to specific committees by the Collaborative Applicant. Committees should be advised about the availability of such staffing support, so that they can plan accordingly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was agreement that achievement of some of the targeted improvements in communication would, at least in part, depend upon the adequacy of staffing provided by the Collaborative Applicant, which in turn, would depend upon the level of funding by HUD or other sources. In the likely absence of adequate funds/staffing to address all possible committee needs, there needs to be a transparent basis for allocating staff to committees.
<p>(12)The CoC should devise a process whereby stakeholders concerned about a decision by the governing board or one of its committees have a meaningful opportunity to bring their concern to that board, for consideration. The CoC should likewise devise a process whereby stakeholders concerned about how a policy has been implemented or applied by the Collaborative Applicant have some form of recourse to a neutral third party.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We heard that the Alliance used to advocate for providers with respect to funding and other decisions made by City or state agencies, and that in its current role, it cannot do that. And we heard that there is a need for a meaningful path for contesting decisions by the Planning Council in its governing capacity or the Collaborative Applicant in its execution of CoC responsibilities. This recommendation calls for the development of a process for contesting certain key decisions or actions by the governing board or the Collaborative Applicant.

<p>(13)The CoC should clarify the nature and role of any membership dues or other assessments paid to support the work of the Collaborative Applicant, and should establish protections for ensuring that actions by the Collaborative Applicant do not favor or penalize organizational members of the CoC, based upon the payment or non-payment of such dues or assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several stakeholders noted the potential conflict of interest when an organization paying dues to the Collaborative Applicant (through the Service Providers Commission, currently) is also subject to project oversight by that same Collaborative Applicant. This recommendation calls for a clear mechanism for avoiding an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
<p>(14)The CoC should define and implement a mechanism for establishing metrics for and tracking the performance of the Collaborative Applicant and the HMIS Lead, and for periodically tracking and reporting on the progress of the Collaborative Applicant and the HMIS Lead in meeting any such performance goals and objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders repeatedly stated that the Collaborative Applicant should be "accountable" to the governing board, and expressed concerns about the potential lack of accountability when the HMIS Lead is the same entity as the Collaborative Applicant. This recommendation parallels language in the CoC Interim Rule relative to performance management of ESG and CoC-funded projects, and applies it to the performance of the Collaborative Applicant and the HMIS Lead.