



Department of Commerce

Homelessness in Washington State

2018 Annual Report

December 2018
Report to the Legislature
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Washington State Department of Commerce

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Executive Summary

This annual report complements the Washington State Homeless Strategic Plan updated in 2018, and fulfills reporting requirements outlined in several chapters of the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act, including RCW 43.185c.010, 040, 045, 170, 340, and RCW 43.63A.305 and 311. New reporting requirements were added to the Act during the 2018 legislative session.

Despite a strong state economy, growing incomes, and above-average and improving family stability, Washington has the fifth highest prevalence of homelessness in the nation. The count of people living unsheltered has increased every year since 2013, and now totals over 10,000 people.

In most domains that drive homelessness, Washington is above average and improving, with the notable exception of rental price inflation. Rents have increased 30 percent in the last decade, primarily due to an undersupply of new units versus rapid population increases. Even with above-average income growth for lower-income households in Washington, it has not been enough to keep pace with rent inflation, resulting in more people with already tight budgets being pushed into homelessness.

Additional investments by the Legislature and performance improvements have moderated the impacts of this mismatch between rents and lower incomes, but forecasts show that rent increases and population growth-driven demand will outpace available funding. Washington's top tier performance-based contracting should continue to yield better outcomes with existing investments, but performance improvements do not add up to significant reductions in homelessness without additional investment and a solution to the undersupply of housing.

The Housing Opportunities Act (Chapter 85, Laws of 2018) added significant accountability, specific planning requirements and additional transparency, which is being implemented now. As part of this renewed effort, state, local governments and community partners are actively pursuing:

- Solutions to the housing supply problem.
- Improving performance.
- Quantifying the necessary level of investment to leave no person living outside.

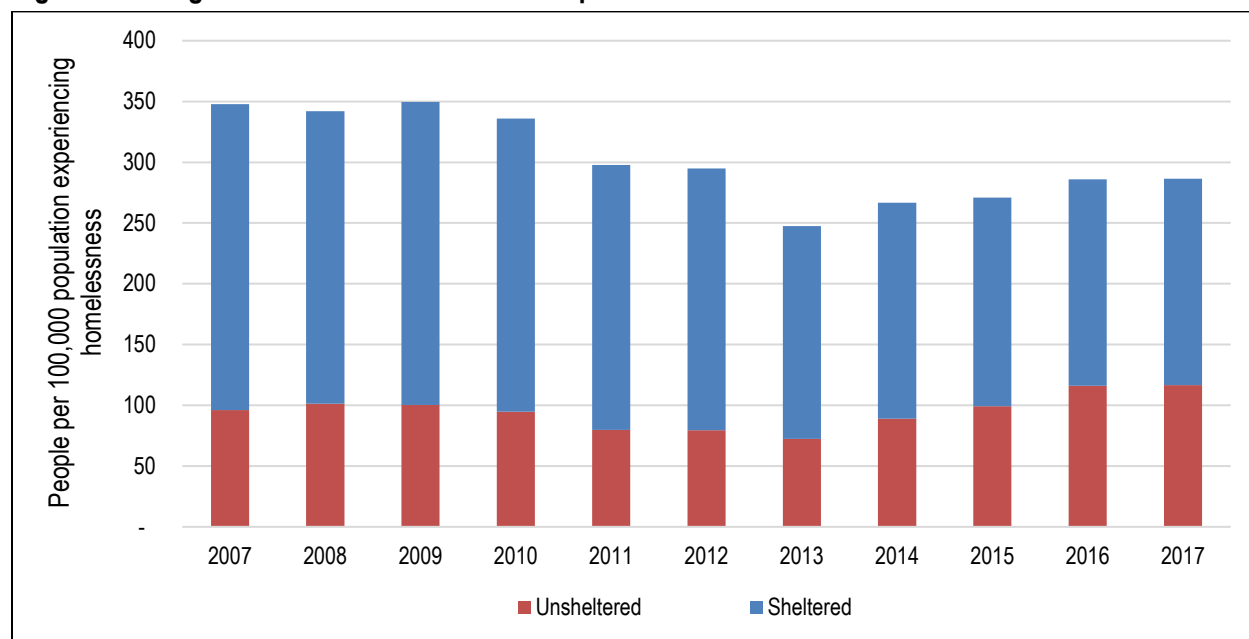
Complementing the department's broad effort to address homelessness, the Office of Homeless Youth, created through the Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Act of 2015, continues its cross-systems partnership to work toward all young people having a safe and stable home and the support they need to thrive. The office's work around expanding services, best practices, data collection, performance management and coordinated entry implementation is integrated tightly with, and informed by, the larger overall effort to address homelessness in Washington.

Assessing the Current Conditions of Homelessness

Adult and Family Homelessness

Data-driven investments resulting from the 2006 Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act led to declines in homelessness through 2012. However, Washington’s exceptionally strong economic growth without a matching increase in the housing supply contributed to a 30 percent rent inflation since 2012, moving Washington from having the 12th to the eighth highest rents in the nation. Concurrent with these rent increases, the count of people experiencing homelessness in Washington increased 26 percent, and Washington now has the fifth highest rate of homelessness in the nation, with over 10,000 people living unsheltered, and over 11,000 people living in temporary homeless housing.

Figure 1: Changes in Homelessness 2007-2017 per the Point-in-Time Count

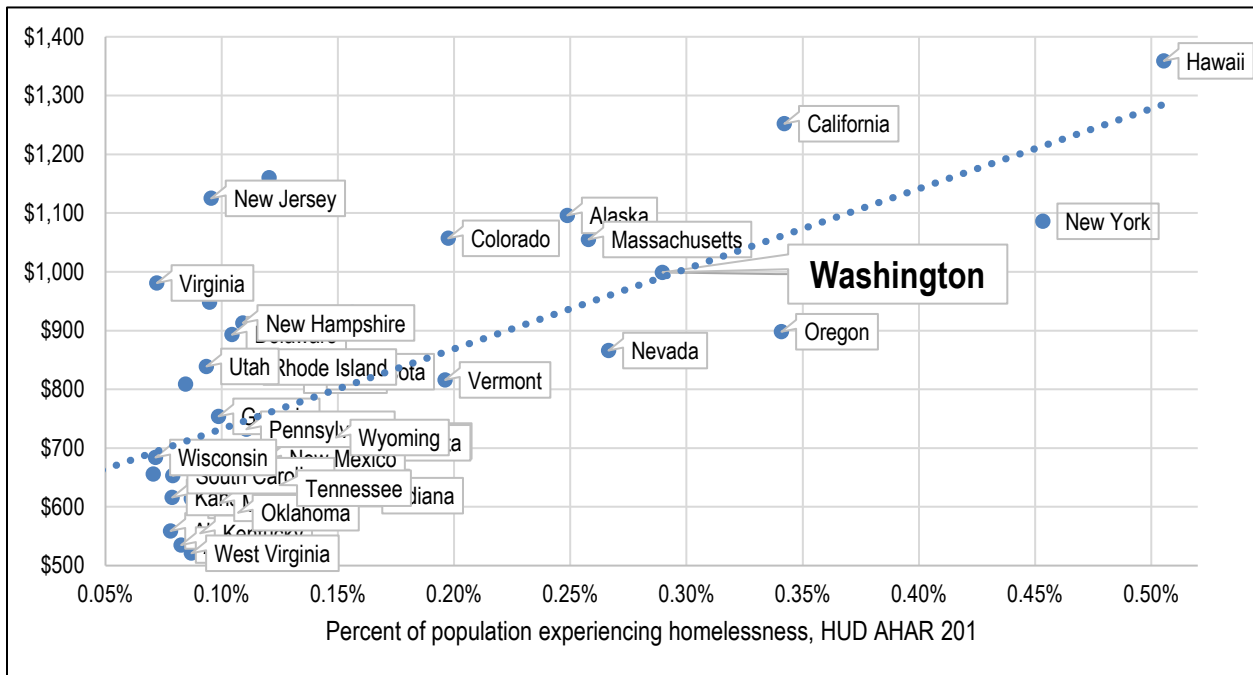


Source: Washington Annual Point in Time Count

Although Washington has an exceptionally high rate of homelessness, when compared to rent levels, Washington’s rate of homelessness is average. The correlation between rent levels and homelessness (+0.66) is much stronger than other potential drivers of the increase. For example the correlation between homelessness and the supplemental poverty measure is counterintuitively negligible (+0.16), and states with large increases in opiate deaths actually experience a drop in the rate of homelessness. Washington experienced a below-average increase in opiate deaths during this time period when compared to other states.

Measures of family structure and stability are top tier in Washington and improving, and should be a countervailing force to the rent-driven increases in homelessness.

Figure 2: Median Rent and Percent of Population Experiencing Homelessness by State



Source: Median contract rent, Census Bureau ACS 2016 1-year estimate; 2017 HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report.

Washington economic growth has been ranked first for two consecutive years, and now has the 10th highest per capita GDP among states. The lowest incomes (bottom quintile households) in Washington are ranked eighth in the nation, and the poverty rate is falling (now ranked 36th). The percentage of people working is increasing (now ranked 25th), and the percent of people collecting disability remains below the national average.

Addressing the Growing Need

Updates to the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act (Chapter 43.185C RCW) have positioned Washington as a national leader in state-driven performance contracts that have improved the efficiency of the existing homeless crisis response system investments. Legislatively required updates to local and state strategic plans will include an accounting of performance, policy, and resources changes necessary to leave no person living outside.

The plans will build off transparent, research-supported assumptions about the cost per successful intervention and related assumptions about reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness.

Newly available research and cross-jurisdictional performance data show that it is possible to reduce dramatically the number of people living outside, and a combination of lower rent inflation, improved performance, and adequate investment levels can bring Washington’s performance in line with higher-performing peer states.

Youth and Young Adult Homelessness

At least 13,000 young people, ages 12 through 24, live on the street or in unsafe or unstable housing situations, and are on their own, without a parent or guardian. This often is referred to as “unaccompanied” homelessness.

Young people can experience homelessness for any number of reasons, including family dysfunction or conflict, rejection due to sexual orientation or gender identity, or economic instability that leads to separation from family. In short, young people become homeless when home is not safe, not supportive, or does not exist.

Some Young People are at Greater Risk of Homelessness

- Youth of color experience homelessness at much higher rates than the rest of the youth population. Black youth in Washington make up 24 percent of the homeless youth population, but represent only 6 percent of the total youth population.¹
- Up to 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, while only 3 to 5 percent of the U.S. population identifies as LGBTQ.²
- Approximately 1 in 4 youth who exit foster care and 1 in 3 exiting the juvenile or adult justice system experience homelessness. Nearly 1,200 youth and young adults exiting behavioral health inpatient treatment experienced homelessness in a single year (23 percent of those exiting).³
- Youth with less than a high school diploma or GED have a 346 percent higher risk of homelessness.⁴

Adolescence is a Unique Period that Demands a Tailored Approach

Experiencing homelessness during adolescence can have a profound and enduring impact on a person’s life. Ages 12 through 24 are a key developmental window where significant changes are happening physically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially. The adolescent brain is plastic, meaning that it is malleable and highly sensitive to its environment. During times of heightened sensitivity (which occur during both early childhood and adolescence), the brain is more vulnerable to damage from physical harms, like drugs or environmental toxins, or psychological ones, like trauma and stress.⁵ It is also more responsive to positive influences,

¹ Washington State Department of Commerce, “Office of Homeless Youth 2016 Report to the Governor and Legislature,” <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/hau-ohy-report-2016-update.pdf>

² Ray, N., “Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness,” (2006), <http://www.thetaskforce.org/lgbt-youth-an-epidemic-of-homelessness/>

³ Mayfield, Jim et al., “Housing Status of Youth Exiting Foster Care, Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Systems,” (2017), <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/rda/research-reports/housing-status-youth-exiting-foster-care-behavioral-health-and-criminal-justice-systems>

⁴ Chapin Hall, *Voices of Youth Count*, <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/>

⁵ Steinberg, Lawrence, “Age of Opportunity, Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence,” (2015)

making interventions that occur during this time significant in their influence on a young person's success and stability into adulthood. Simply put, the period of adolescence is our last best chance to put individuals on a positive pathway to a happy and fulfilling life.

The conditions under which young people enter into homelessness require that our response be more holistic rather than focused on housing alone. Young people typically lack work experience, have not completed their education, and do not have experience living independently so have not developed skills like budgeting, housekeeping, and job searching. Due to their age, they are at greater risk of victimization.⁶

The Office of Homeless Youth addresses youth homelessness through five key components identified in RCW 43.330.700 to prepare young people for a bright future:

1. Stable housing
2. Permanent connections
3. Family reconciliation
4. Education and employment
5. Social and emotional well-being

Washington Can Lead the Way

Working together, we can ensure that all young people have a safe and stable home and the support they need to thrive. Washington is positioned to lead the nation in making this vision a reality. The establishment of the Office of Homeless Youth in 2015 solidified the state's commitment to take a laser-like approach in addressing this issue. There is a strong movement of leaders, funders, and young people working together to end youth and young adult homelessness. Bold initiatives have recently launched including:

- A Way Home, Washington's Anchor Communities Initiative, to end youth and young adult homelessness in four communities by 2022.
- \$12.5 million in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program grants for King, Snohomish, and the 23 most rural counties in the state.
- A partnership between the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and the Office of Homeless Youth to support families and youth in crisis and ensure that youth exit public systems of care into safe and stable housing.

Significant progress has been made on recommendations proposed in the Office of Homeless Youth's 2016 Report, including expanded access to Extended Foster Care, increased funding for housing and shelter, and policies to support the academic success of students experiencing homelessness. While progress was made, much work remains. Washington must remain steadfast in its commitment to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness.

⁶ National Network for Youth, "What Works to End Youth Homelessness?," (2015), <https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-What-Works-to-End-Youth-Homlessness.pdf>

Challenges to Reducing Homelessness

There are broader system and administrative challenges to reducing homelessness in our state. The system challenges such as institutional discharges into homelessness, rising rents, and lack of affordable housing, coupled with growth management laws, fall outside of the capacity of local homeless crisis response system to make significant changes. Instead, those local crisis response systems work to improve efficiencies that sometimes can be seen only at the margins. Even after performance benchmarks are achieved, modeling shows that existing resources are inadequate to reach the goal of leaving no person living outside.

System Challenges

Increases in Rent

Rental rates may have stopped increasing in most counties, and in some, may be declining. However, the long-term structural balance may result in a chronic undersupply of housing, resulting in further excessive rent inflation and increases in homelessness. With chronic, excessive rent inflation, the need for more low-income housing rises and may make it difficult for state and local governments to keep pace with growing need.

Lack of Housing

According to a study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the U. S. has a shortage of 7.4 million affordable rental homes available to extremely low-income renter households, resulting in 35 affordable and available units for every 100 extremely low-income renter households.⁷ The study also shows that Washington is no exception, with less than the national average. Because of the shortage of affordable and available homes, many lower-income households spend more on housing than they can afford sacrificing income for health care, food, transportation, childcare, and utilities.

Current Gaps in Youth and Young Adult System Limit Prevention and Pathways out of Homelessness

- Geographic gaps: Youth and young adults experience homelessness in every region of our state. Despite what many people assume, rates of youth homelessness are similar in rural and urban areas.⁸ Yet while there are youth experiencing homelessness in all communities of the state, the resources to help them are not. There are no beds for homeless youth in half of the 39 counties in Washington.

⁷ National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing," (2018), http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2018.pdf

⁸ Chapin Hall, *Voices of Youth Count*, (2018), <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/>

- Lack of prevention services: Families experiencing conflict or disruption do not have access to the support needed to build resiliency and resolve challenges. They need access to robust crisis intervention, family counseling and reconciliation, and behavioral health services to prevent young people from having even a single experience of homelessness.
- Inadequate transition planning from public systems: Young people transitioning from public systems of care, such as foster care and the justice system, are leaving without the proper preparation and support to ensure their safety and stability.

Administrative Challenges

Statewide By-Name List

Identifying and prioritizing people experiencing homelessness is central to efficiently using limited resources. By-name lists are real-time lists of all people experiencing homelessness in a service area. A by-name list provides an ongoing snapshot of who is homeless and what their needs and preferences are. A well-implemented by-name list can also help service providers understand inflow into a homeless response system as people become homeless as well as outflow out of the system as people obtain permanent housing or leave a service area.

The HUD has made a positive long-term contribution to this initiative by releasing draft data standards governing the systems and procedures for coordinated entry, but release of final federal standards has delayed Commerce’s ability to add new contract requirements. In the interim, Commerce has dedicated technical assistance staff to work with counties to strengthen their own procedures while we wait for the data standards and vendor updates to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Homeless housing service providers use HMIS to collect and manage data gathered during the course of providing housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness.

Modeling Tools

Accurately quantifying the impact of performance improvements and investment levels is critical to developing meaningful local and state strategic plans. Existing tools to develop these estimates, built using hidden assumptions and calculations, are hard to use and understand given the inherent complexity of modeling flow of people through a system. Commerce has developed non-proprietary modeling tools with transparent underlying calculations and assumptions, but assisting local planning processes with understanding and using these tools will be a challenge for the department.

Homeless System Performance

Homeless System Performance Goals and Targets

Performance measures help evaluate the effectiveness of Homeless Crisis Response Systems as they work towards ending homelessness. Each performance measure has a target that is the level of desirable performance and is an indicator of a high-performing system. Commerce has identified the following as the most critical homeless system performance measures:

1. Prioritizing unsheltered homeless households.
2. Increasing exits to permanent housing.
3. Reducing returns to homelessness.
4. Reducing the length of time homeless.

Homeless Crisis Response Systems work to meet benchmarks for each performance measure. The benchmark is a short-term goal to improve performance. The benchmark is set using local data and indicates acceptable progress toward the target within a given timeframe.

Because homeless housing projects work together, performance is measured using system-wide data. This means data from all applicable homeless housing projects are included in the baseline data and in the performance results regardless of fund sources.

Prioritizing Unsheltered Homeless Households

In January 2016, Commerce introduced the first performance improvement requirement to the Consolidated Homeless Grant, which was to prioritize people experiencing unsheltered homelessness⁹ for services and programs. At that time, only 41 percent of the people served were experiencing unsheltered homelessness, or had a history of unsheltered homelessness. Initially, grantees were required to increase the percent of people served who were experiencing unsheltered homeless to 35 percent. Most grantees exceeded the benchmark, and the statewide rate of service to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness increased to 57 percent.

As of July 2017, grantees are required to continue to increase the percentage of unsheltered homeless served or achieve functional zero. Functional zero means that the average number of housing placements keeps pace with the number of people experiencing homelessness.

⁹ The Unsheltered Prioritization measurement includes any person who was unsheltered in the last two years, as measured in the Homeless Management Information System, by living situation (place not meant for habitation, e.g., vehicle, abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport, park, camping ground or anywhere outside), OR people indicating that they are currently fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions.

Additionally, grantees that are serving high levels of unsheltered homeless but have not achieved functional zero may assert that the county has met a high performance threshold, evaluated by Commerce, based on state and local administrative data, and qualitative data gathered from key stakeholders.

Improving Housing Outcomes

In July 2017, Commerce introduced additional performance improvement requirements to the Consolidated Homeless Grant with the aim of improving the housing outcomes of homeless crisis response systems. Commerce provided grantees with a menu of performance measures specific to intervention type (see table below). For each intervention type, grantees adopted the required performance measure(s), and at least one secondary performance measure. Using local data, they chose short-term improvement goals.

Performance measures and benchmarks are required to be included in sub-contracts for all Consolidated Homeless Grant and Emergency Shelter Grant funded housing interventions. However, grantees are encouraged to customize sub-grantee performance benchmarks according to past performance, facility type, or other variables. For example, to increase system-wide exits to permanent housing from emergency shelters, a grantee may require a high-performing, continuous-stay emergency shelter to reach 80 percent exits to permanent housing while a night-by-night shelter is required only to reach 30 percent exits to permanent housing. Regardless of how grantees pass performance improvement requirements to sub-grantees, performance measurement is system-wide.

Figure 3: Intervention Types, Performance Measures and Performance Targets

Intervention Type	Performance Measure (required measures are bold)	Performance Target
Emergency Shelter	Increase Percent Exits to Permanent Housing	At Least 50%
	Reduce Median Length of Stay	20 Days or Less
	Reduce Average Length of Stay	20 Days or Less
	Reduce Percent Return to Homelessness in 2 Years	Less than 10%
Transitional Housing	Increase Percent Exits to Permanent Housing	At Least 80%
	Reduce Median Length of Stay	90 Days or Less
	Reduce Average Length of Stay	90 Days or Less
	Reduce Percent Return to Homelessness in 2 Years	Less than 5%
Rapid Re-Housing	Increase Percent Exits to Permanent Housing	At Least 80%
	Reduce Percent Return to Homelessness in 2 Years	Less than 5%
Targeted Prevention	Reduce Number of New Homeless	Reduce Number
	Increase Percent served coming from institutional setting or temporarily staying with family or friends (doubled up)	At Least 80%
	Increase Percent served with past homelessness	At Least 80%
Permanent Supportive Housing	Increase Percent Exits to or Retention of Permanent Housing	At Least 95%

Monitoring and Communicating Performance

Commerce analyzes homeless system performance quarterly and annually to assess the degree to which systems are making progress on their benchmarks. Performance outcomes communicate through the “Washington State Homeless System Performance Reports.” The reports provide information on critical homeless system performance measures and other contextual information about a community’s homeless crisis response system.

The reports:

- Identify evidence-based housing interventions that efficiently move people experiencing homelessness into permanent destinations.
- Provide communities with information regarding their progress towards locally established performance benchmarks.
- Evaluate if improvement strategies are having the intended impact.
- Highlight data quality.

Data Sources

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the data source for most of the information used in the “Washington State Homeless System Performance Reports.” Homeless housing service providers use HMIS to collect and manage data gathered during the course of providing housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness. Other data sources include the annual County Expenditure Report, and the annual Point-In-Time Count.

Figure 4: Illustration of How HMIS Data is used for Reporting



Washington State Homeless System Performance Reports

The County Report Card and Year-to-Year Comparison provide annual performance outcome results for Washington as a whole, and for each county. Data from all homeless housing projects that participate in HMIS are included in these reports.

The County Report Card provides information by county on system-wide performance measures, including exits to permanent housing, returns to homelessness, length of time homeless, and cost per exit to permanent housing. The County Report Card is embedded in an interactive map that identifies performance outcome results for the reporting period.

The Year-to-Year Comparison table provides information by county on system-wide performance measures for each year.¹⁰ It also includes contextual information such as Point-in-Time Count results and rental vacancy rates. The interactive table allows the viewer to see trends over time.

Dashboards provide performance outcome results for counties as a whole, for each agency, and for each project each quarter. The dashboards are organized by different types of interventions, and each dashboard includes a data quality component to help direct service providers ensure their data are accurate and complete. At this time, only counties that are included in the Balance of State Continuum of Care are included in project-type dashboards.

Rapid Re-Housing Dashboard:¹¹ Rapid Re-Housing projects aim to quickly move households from homelessness into permanent housing by providing move-in assistance, temporary rent subsidies, and housing-focused case management. Critical performance measures for Rapid Re-Housing projects include:

- Increasing exits to permanent housing.
- Reducing returns to homelessness.
- Decreasing time to move-in.

Temporary Housing Dashboard:¹² Temporary Housing projects include emergency shelters and transitional housing projects. Temporary housing interventions intend to provide short-term lodging to people experiencing homelessness. Participants will eventually leave the unit when they resolve their housing situation or at the maximum stay allowable by the project. Critical performance measures for temporary housing projects are:

- Increasing exits to permanent housing.

¹⁰<https://public.tableau.com/profile/comhau#!/vizhome/WashingtonStateHomelessSystemPerformanceYeartoYearComparison-DRAFT/YeartoYearDashboard>

¹¹<https://public.tableau.com/profile/comhau#!/vizhome/DRAFTWashingtonBalanceofStateHomelessSystemPerformanceRapidRe-HousingDashboard/RRHDashboard>

¹²https://public.tableau.com/profile/comhau#!/vizhome/WashingtonBalanceofStateHomelessSystemPerformanceTemporaryHousingDashboard_0/ESTHDashboard

- Reducing returns to homelessness.
- Decreasing length of stay.

Homelessness Prevention Dashboard link:¹³ Homelessness prevention projects intend to prevent homelessness for currently housed people by providing crisis resolution focused services and financial assistance if needed. Critical performance measures for homelessness prevention projects are reducing the number of new people entering the homeless system, and targeting assistance to those most likely to become homeless.

¹³<https://public.tableau.com/profile/comhau#!/vizhome/WashingtonBalanceofStateHomelessSystemPerformance/HomelessPreventionDashboard/HPDashboard>

Homeless System Performance Successes: Rural Washington

Homeless system performance in rural and mid-size counties in Washington improved in state fiscal year 2018 compared to state fiscal year 2017, with all Washington counties meeting their improvement goals on one or more of the homeless system performance measures.

- Exits to permanent housing increased from 47 percent to 50 percent overall.
- Exits to permanent housing improved among emergency shelter programs from 26 percent to 31 percent. The state target for exits to permanent housing from emergency shelters is 50 percent.
- Exits to permanent housing among rapid re-housing programs remained steady at 78 percent. The state target for exits to permanent housing from rapid re-housing programs is 80 percent.
- Households served by permanent housing-type projects, including rapid re-housing, are very unlikely to return to homelessness as compared to other intervention types with only 7 percent returning to homelessness after two years.
- The average length of stay in emergency shelter and transitional housing programs increased slightly from 101 days to 105 days.
- The average length of time homelessness increased overall from 221 days to 263 days, due to the prioritization of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and chronically homeless households.
- The number of people experiencing homelessness for the first time decreased from 13,554 to 12,523.

The tables below highlight grantees in rural Washington that made the most progress on improving housing outcomes for emergency shelter and rapid re-housing.

Figure 5: Emergency Shelters – Improving Housing Outcomes

Top-Ten Improved Exits to Permanent Housing			
County or Region	7/1/2016 - 6/30/2017	7/1/2017 - 6/30/2018	Change
Asotin	26.92	64.29	37.37
Clallam	32.98	40.99	8.01
Cowlitz	26.67	44.75	18.08
Island	34.81	44.12	9.31
Lewis	43.9	50.39	6.49
Region Benton - Franklin	33.33	57.2	23.87
Region Ferry - Stevens	63.27	72.73	9.46
Region Grant - Adams	14.83	26.59	11.76
Thurston	16.96	31.56	14.6
Wahkiakum	45.5	75	29.5

Figure 6: Rapid Rehousing – Improving Housing Outcomes

Top-Ten Improved Exits to Permanent Housing			
County or Region	7/1/2016 - 6/30/2017	7/1/2017 - 6/30/2018	Change
Clallam	77.37	87.59	10.22
Cowlitz	68.93	79.47	10.54
Grays Harbor	74.55	76.7	2.15
Island	75.54	86.45	10.91
Okanogan	88.89	91.74	2.85
Pacific	50.96	64.29	13.33
Region Benton - Franklin	68.76	81.01	12.25
Region Columbia - Garfield	76.92	94.12	17.2
San Juan	66.67	100	33.33
Yakima	69.86	76.26	6.4

Strategies to Improve System Performance

Every community has different resources, strengths, and challenges and will need to take different actions to improve performance results. However, there are high-impact strategies that can improve performance in all communities. Nationally recognized strategies detailed below are best practices in homeless housing services and are a Consolidated Homeless Grant requirement or allowable activity.

Figure 7: Best Practice Strategies

Strategies for Improvement	Prioritize Unsheltered Homeless Households	Increase Exits to Permanent Housing	Reduce Returns to Homelessness	Reduce the Length of Time Homeless
Lower Barriers to Coordinated and Project Entry	✓	✓		✓
Deploy Progressive Engagement Service Models System-Wide		✓	✓	✓
Link Street Outreach to Coordinated Entry	✓	✓		✓
Provide Housing Focused Case Management		✓	✓	✓
Lower Barriers to Project Participation	✓	✓		✓
Provide Housing Search and Placement Services		✓	✓	✓
Target Homeless Prevention Assistance			✓	

Current State Plan Accomplishments

Homeless Strategic Plan Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

Commerce first published a strategic plan separate from the annual report in January 2017 and updated it again in 2018. The plan's vision and mission remain the same, and Commerce continues to address system goals.

Figure 8: Commerce's Homelessness Strategic Plan Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

Vision
No person left living outside.
Mission
Support homeless crisis response systems that efficiently reduce the number of people living outside, and that when scaled appropriately can house all unsheltered people.
Guiding Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ All people deserve a safe place to live.❖ Urgent and bold action is the appropriate response to people living outside.❖ Interventions must be data driven and evidenced based.

Homeless Crisis Response System Goals and Progress

Commerce identified six homeless crisis response system goals to direct our work in 2017 and 2018.

- **Goal 1:** Effective and efficient coordinated access and assessment for services and housing.
- **Goal 2:** Effective and efficient crisis response system.
- **Goal 3:** Identification of policy changes and resources necessary to house all people living unsheltered.
- **Goal 4:** Quantifying what would reduce the number of new people becoming homeless.
- **Goal 5:** Transparent and meaningful accounting of state and local recording fee funds.
- **Goal 6:** Fair and equitable resource distribution.

Each goal included specific actions and timelines connected to a performance measure. Figures 9 through 14 below present the actions, timelines, and results of the work towards the six system goals identified above.

Figure 9: Goal 1 – Effective and Efficient Coordinated Access and Assessment for Services and Housing

Strategy 1.1: Improved Implementation of Coordinated Entry, Outreach & Statewide By-name List			
Actions in Support of Strategy	Timeline	Accountability	Progress Made
1.1.1 Continue technical assistance to counties working to refine their coordinated entry systems and outreach strategies.	On-going	Biennial technical assistance and training plan.	Statewide training and technical assistance including webinars and site visits.
1.1.2 Develop a project plan for an active statewide by-name list in the state's Homeless Management Information System.	2018	Active statewide by-name list.	Project plan implemented and new Housing and Urban Development Coordinated Entry standards under review.
1.1.3 Continue to evaluate and score coordinated entry systems, including adding additional performance measures of coordinated entry and accessibility.	2019	Evaluated biennially by interdisciplinary team.	Project plan developed. Reviews will be completed in 2019.
1.1.4 Expand coordinated entry requirement for all homeless housing programs managed by recipients of, and sub recipients of, Commerce homeless funding.	Completed	Review during compliance monitoring.	Monitoring on-going.
1.1.5 Revise Consolidated Homeless Grants to include the new HUD coordinated entry requirements in 2018—2019 grants.	Completed	Updated Grant Guidelines.	Implemented

Figure 10: Goal 2 – Effective and Efficient Crisis Response System

Strategy 2.1: Promote Evidence-based Housing Interventions that Efficiently Move People Experiencing Homelessness into Permanent Destinations			
Actions in Support of Strategy	Timeline	Accountability	Progress Made
2.1.1 Publish Homeless System Performance <i>County Report Card</i> with system performance measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost per successful exit to permanent housing. • Exits to permanent housing destinations. • Returns to homelessness. • Length of time homeless. 	Annually	Post to Commerce website.	Posted on Commerce website. Next Report Card underway for posting in January 2019.

Actions in Support of Strategy	Timeline	Accountability	Progress Made
<p>2.1.2 Publish Homeless System Performance <i>Project Report</i> with project level performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People served, exited • Exits to permanent housing destinations • Returns to homelessness • Length of stay 	Quarterly	Post to Commerce website.	Posted on Commerce website. Quarterly dashboards posted for Rapid Rehousing, Temporary Housing and Prevention for all projects in every county.
<p>2.1.3 Provide training on Trauma Informed Services, Mental Health First Aid, Low Barrier Conversion, Harm Reduction, Fair Housing, Progressive Engagement, best practices in serving survivors of domestic violence, and Coordinated Entry.</p>	On-going	Biennial technical assistance and training plan.	Training on Trauma Informed Services, Mental Health First Aid started in 2018.
<p>2.1.4 Explore contracting the next biennial 2019 - 2021 Consolidated Homeless Grant funds competitively based on performance.</p>	2018	Procure performance consultant.	In discussions with consultant.
<p>2.1.5 Explore promoting local prioritization of locally-controlled housing funding (recording fees and federal funds awarded to housing authorities) for priority populations in the 2019 homeless grants awarded from Commerce.</p>	2018	Develop policy memo for stakeholder feedback.	Postponed until 2019.
<p>2.1.6 Align homeless grant requirements with system performance measures and benchmarks plus require systems receiving Commerce funds to prioritize serving people who are unsheltered.</p>	Completed	Consolidated Homeless Grant	Completed and being monitored.
<p>2.1.7 Require systems receiving Commerce funds to use a service model that includes the following evidenced based best practices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Access to continued housing assistance should not be contingent on unnecessary conditions. 2) Initial and frequent re-assessment to solve housing crises with minimal services needed. 3) Individualized services responsive to the needs of each household. 4) Voluntary participation in supportive services. 5) Rapid exits to permanent housing. 	Completed	Consolidated Homeless Grant	Completed and being monitored.
<p>2.1.8 Provide local homeless plan academy for county/local governments and introduce Local Plan Modeling Tool.</p>	Completed	Local Plan Modeling Tool	Release draft in October 2018 and final by December 2018.

Figure 11: Goal 3 – Identification of Policy Changes and Resources Necessary to House all People Living Unsheltered

Strategy 3.1: Improve County Data Reporting			
Actions in Support of Strategy	Timeline	Accountability	Progress Made
3.1.1 Contractually require data quality improvements in submission of Homeless Management Information System data and Annual Report submissions by Consolidated Homeless Grantees. Thresholds introduced in 2018 and required contractually in 2019.	Thresholds introduced in 2018 and required contractually in 2019.	Improved data quality scores in <i>Homeless System Performance Report Card</i> .	Ongoing
3.1.2 Contractually require best practices in administering the Point-in Time count by Consolidated Homeless Grantees.	Introduced in 2018 and required contractually in 2019.	Improved data quality scores in <i>Homeless System Performance Report Card</i> .	Postponed
3.1.3 Expand participation in statewide by name list in the Homeless Management Information System in cooperation with the Department of Social and Health Services and other entities in contact with people experiencing homelessness.	2018 - 2019	Improved data quality scores in <i>Homeless System Performance Report Card</i> .	Ongoing
Strategy 3.2: Develop Unmet Need Estimate to House all People Living Unsheltered			
3.2.1 Propose law and policy changes to support cross agency data sharing capacity.	On-going	Interagency Council on Homelessness.	On-going
3.2.2 Work with state agencies to determine the counts of people unsheltered whose housing is the direct responsibility of state agencies.	On-going	Interagency Council on Homelessness.	On-going
3.2.3 Develop unmet count based on statewide byname lists in the Homeless Management Information System.	On-going	Post to Commerce website.	Postponed until federal data standards are finalized.
3.2.4 Supplement Point-in-Time count with count derived from administrative data collected by the Department of Social and Health Services.	Twice annually	Post to Commerce website.	Posted on Commerce website.
3.2.5 Estimate policy and resource changes in resources necessary to leave no person living outside, based on contracted system performance targets and updated enumerations of people living outside.	January 2018	Update state Homeless Housing Strategic Plan to include updated resource gap calculations.	Underway

Figure 12: Goal 4 – Quantifying What Would Reduce the Number of New People Becoming Homeless

Strategy 4.1: Facilitate Identification of Policy and Resource Changes that Would Reduce the Number of New People Becoming Homeless			
Actions in Support of Strategy	Timeline	Accountability	Progress Made
4.1.1 Engage local governments and service providers to solicit ideas on interventions and policy changes that would reduce the number of people becoming homeless.	2018	Commerce publishes literature review and model assumptions.	Ongoing
4.1.2 Review literature to quantify the impact of upstream interventions that could reduce the number of people at-risk of becoming homeless by increasing incomes, improving family stability, and reducing behavioral health problems.	2018	Commerce publishes literature review and model assumptions.	Ongoing

Figure 13: Goal 5 – Transparent Accounting of State and Local Recording Fee Funds

Strategy 5.1: Publish County Report Cards			
Actions in Support of Strategy	Timeline	Accountability	Progress Made
5.1.1 Compile data from the Homeless Management Information System, contract compliance, spending, and other data sources to develop county reports cards.	Annually	Post to Commerce website.	Posted to Commerce website.
Strategy 5.2: Publish Spending and Performance Data for all Projects Funded by State and Local Recording Fees			
5.2.1 Commerce drafts annual report and presents to the Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Statewide Advisory Council on Homelessness.	Annually	Post to Commerce website.	Current
Strategy 5.3: Ensure Access to all Homeless Data			
5.3.1 Require counties not able to export client data to the state Homeless Management Information System by December 2016 to use the state Homeless Management Information System for direct data entry. Provide technical assistance to all data integration counties.	In progress.	All statewide data available to Commerce.	Postponed

Figure 14: Goal 6 – Fair and Equitable Resource Distribution

Strategy 6.1: Staff Development on System Disparities			
Actions in Support of Strategy	Timeline	Accountability	Progress Made
Identify training plan for staff development.	2018	Staff complete training in 2018.	Initial plan developed for 2018-2019.
Strategy 6.2: Examine System Disparities			
Identify components and timeframe for completing the work.	2018	Staff produce draft findings and recommend strategies in 2019.	Ongoing
Strategy 6.3: Produce Recommendations			
Include remedies in the future State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan.	2018	Updated Plan includes remedies.	Ongoing

Future Planning and Reporting

With the passage of the Washington Housing Opportunities Act (Chapter 85, Laws of 2018), Commerce has new state strategic plan and annual reporting requirements.

State Strategic Plan Timeline

Below is the timeline for meeting the new State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan and Local Homeless Plan requirements.

- Commerce will release updated Local Homeless Plan guidance by December 2018; updated plans are due from local governments to Commerce by December 2019.
- Commerce will produce an updated State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan by July 2019 and every five years thereafter.
- Commerce will evaluate and post local homeless plans on our website in 2020.
- Commerce will provide technical assistance to local governments whose local homeless plans do not meet state guidance in 2020.

Beginning in December 2019, Commerce will annually report an assessment of the state's performance in furthering the goals of the updated State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan and the performance of each local government in creating and executing a local homeless plan that meets the state guidance.

State Strategic Plan Content

Commerce will adopt the updated Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness published by the U. S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and identify actions and timeline to achieve the objectives.

Additionally, and as required in recent legislation, Commerce will include the following in the State Strategic Plan in July 2019.

Performance measures:

- Short- and long-term goals to reduce homelessness.
- Analysis of services and programs at the state and county level.
- Identification of programs representing best practices and outcomes.
- Recognition of programs targeted to populations or geographic areas in recognition of diverse needs.
- New or innovative funding, programs and service strategies.
- Analysis of current drivers of homelessness.
- Implementation strategy with timelines outlining roles and responsibilities at the state and local level.

Commerce will consult with the following stakeholders in developing the updated State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan:

- State Consolidated Homeless Grant grantees:¹⁴ The Consolidated Homeless Grant Program at Commerce uses state funds to support all 39 counties in maintaining an integrated system of housing assistance.
- Office of Homeless Youth:¹⁵ The Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs leads the statewide efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness for youth and young adults.
- Washington State Balance of State Continuum of Care:¹⁶ Commerce is the Collaborative Applicant for the Washington Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC). The BoS CoC's 34 small and medium-sized counties receive about \$6 million annually for permanent and temporary housing projects funded by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care Program.
- Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (WLIHA) Homeless Advisory Committee:¹⁷ WLIHA leads statewide advocacy efforts to ensure that all our residents thrive in safe, healthy, affordable homes. They do this through advocacy, education, and organizing.
- State Interagency Council on Homelessness:¹⁸ The Interagency Council on Homelessness (as defined in RCW 43.185C.010) meets throughout the year to coordinate the state's response to homelessness, including guiding creation of the state strategic plan, and making budget and policy recommendations to the governor.
- State Advisory Council on Homelessness:¹⁹ The State Advisory Council on Homelessness was created by executive order in 1994 to advise governors on homelessness issues. It includes 12 members who represent various stakeholder groups including business, philanthropy, youth, housing authorities and local governments.
- The Affordable Housing Advisory Board:²⁰ The Affordable Housing Advisory Board advises the Department of Commerce on housing and housing-related issues. There are 22 members representing a variety of housing interests around the state.

¹⁴ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/consolidated-homeless-grant/>

¹⁵ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/office-of-youth-homelessness/>

¹⁶ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/continuum-of-care/>

¹⁷ <https://www.wliha.org/about-us/overview>

¹⁸ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/about-us/boards-and-commissions/homeless-councils/>

¹⁹ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/about-us/boards-and-commissions/homeless-councils/>

²⁰ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/about-us/boards-and-commissions/affordable-housing-advisory-board/>

Recommendations

- Identify and implement strategies to rein in excessive market rate housing price inflation.
- Increase funding for the Housing Trust Fund to increase the number of subsidized housing units available for low-income and special needs households.
- Provide additional funding for housing assistance to increase the capacity of the homelessness response system in Washington.

Appendix A: Organizational Outline

The Department of Commerce Housing Assistance Unit is divided into several offices in response to legislative requirements and responsibilities.

Figure 15: Offices Within the Housing Assistance Unit

Housing Assistance Unit				
Office of Family & Adult Homelessness	Office of Homeless Youth Prevention & Protection Programs	Office of Behavioral Health	Performance Office	Balance of State Continuum of Care and Reporting Office

The Office of Family and Adult Homelessness (OFAH) administers state and federal fund sources that are granted to local governments and nonprofits.

Figure 16: Fund Sources of Office of Family and Adult Homelessness Managed Grants

Grant	Fund Source
Consolidated Homeless Grant	Housing surcharge/document recording fee
Housing and Essential Needs	General fund state
Homeless Student Stability Program	General fund state
HOME Tenant Based Rental Assistance	Federal
Emergency Solutions Grant	Federal

You can learn more about the OFAH on the Commerce website at:

www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/office-of-family-and-adult-homelessness/.

The Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) Prevention & Protection Programs administers state fund sources that are granted to local governments and nonprofits. These include:

- Crisis Residential Centers
- HOPE Centers
- Independent Youth Housing Program
- Street Youth Services
- Young Adult Shelter
- Youth Adult Housing Program

You can learn more about the OHY on the Commerce website at: www.commerce.wa.gov/ohy.

The Office of Behavioral Health administers the Landlord Mitigation Program and HUD 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration Grant. You can learn more about the Landlord Mitigation Program on the Commerce website at www.commerce.wa.gov/building-

[infrastructure/housing/landlord-mitigation-program/](#) and the HUD 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration Grant at www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/hud-section-811-rental-assistance/.

The Performance Office produces the Homeless System Performance Reports and County Report Cards, dashboards on homeless interventions, and more. This office also leads compliance efforts with the low-barrier and coordinated entry requirements for Consolidated Homeless Grant grantees. You can learn more about how this office provides information on the homeless system performance on the Commerce website at: www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/homeless-system-performance/.

The Balance of State Continuum of Care and Reporting Office works with 34 counties represented in the Balance of Washington State Continuum of Care to submit a consolidated application for funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. You can read more about the Balance of State Continuum of Care on the Commerce website at: www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/continuum-of-care/.

In addition, this Office administers the state's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). It provides front-end solutions for the Balance of State and King County Continuums, as well as data integration technology to bring the other continuum data into the statewide database. HMIS is the data source for most of the information used in our performance reports. Homeless housing service providers use HMIS to collect and manage data gathered during the course of providing housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness. You can read more about HMIS on the Commerce website at: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/hmis/>.

Appendix B: Homeless Housing Project Expenditure and Data Report

RCW 43.185c.045 requires that each county in Washington report all expenditures by funding sources (federal, state and local) for homeless housing projects in their community. Commerce combines expenditures data with Homeless Management Information System data to create an even more comprehensive report that not only reports expenditures but also links it to outcomes.

In state fiscal year 2018, 2,355 projects spent \$255,040,669 assisting 152,068 households who were homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The table below summarizes the number of beds and cost per intervention.

Figure 17: Homeless Housing Project Expenditures for State Fiscal Year 2018

	Rapid Re-housing	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Homeless Prevention	Permanent Supportive Housing	Other Permanent Housing	Street Outreach	Services Only
Beds	4,452	20,349	6,660	7,163	12,818	4,010	4,116	20,005
Total Expenditures	\$42,389,212	\$50,102,694	\$18,616,067	\$27,169,538	\$68,190,346	\$16,451,556	\$3,164,533	\$18,334,842
Cost per day per Household	\$49.30	\$31.43	\$30.11	\$14.34	\$30.67	\$32.59	n/a	n/a
Cost per successful exit per Household	\$9,527.81	\$8,991.87	\$14,658.32	\$5,769.70	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

You can find the state fiscal year 2018 homeless housing projects expenditure and data report on our website at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/state-strategic-plan-annual-report-and-audits/>.

You can find out how the Performance Office uses the expenditure and data on our website at www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/homeless-system-performance/.

Appendix C: State Funded Homeless Housing Reports

Several RCWs require Commerce to report on expenditures, performance, and outcomes of state funds for the following:

- Consolidated Homeless Grant: RCW 43A.285C.045
- Housing and Essential Needs: RCW 43.185C.220
- Homeless Student Stability Program: RCW 43.185C.340
- Independent youth housing program: RCW 43.63A.311

Commerce reports include the grant recipient and service area, expenditures, interventions and number of households assisted. They may also include additional specific information required in each RCW.

You can find the state fiscal year 2018 state funded homeless housing reports on our website at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/state-strategic-plan-annual-report-and-audits/>.

Appendix D: Landlord Sampling Report

RCW 43.185C.240 requires that Commerce develop a sampling method to obtain data and report by county on:

- Type of landlord receiving services.
- Number of households.
- Number of people in households.
- Number of payments.
- Total of payments.
- Number of households receiving eviction prevention payments.
- Number of people in households receiving eviction prevention payments.
- Number of eviction prevention payments.
- Total of eviction prevention payments.

You can find the state fiscal year 2018 Landlord Sampling Report on our website at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/state-strategic-plan-annual-report-and-audits/>.

Appendix E: Point-in-Time Count

RCW 43.185c.045 requires that Commerce report on the annual homeless point-in-time census conducted under RCW 43.185C.030. Each county is required to conduct an annual one-day survey of people who are without permanent housing. The 2018 count took place on Jan. 25, 2018, and the results were released in May 2018.

Count results by county are located on the Commerce website at:

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/annual-point-time-count/>.