



STATE OF WASHINGTON
HOMELESS HOUSING
STRATEGIC PLAN

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Department of Commerce

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the Washington State Legislature passed the [Homeless Housing and Assistance Act](#) which outlined several bold policies to address homelessness. The Act also required the Department of Commerce (Commerce) to develop a strategic 10-year Plan which was first submitted in 2006 and updated again in 2014. Since 2006, the State has assisted over 556,000 people experiencing homelessness. These people were previously unsheltered in places not meant for human habitation, living in emergency shelters, temporary housing, or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

This is the third update to the Washington State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan which includes a new statewide vision that directs our efforts and resources to ensure that people have a safe place to live. The Plan's guiding principles and goals support the State's homeless housing policies and funding so that Commerce, contracted local governments, service providers, and partnering agencies have clear expectations and benchmarks to guide this important work.

The plan includes specific minimum system performance requirements that will be incorporated into state

contracts with local governments and other housing providers starting July 2017. Beyond the universally required performance standards, recipients of state funds will be required to choose additional system performance standards from a menu of choices for inclusion in state contracts.

Local systems not able to perform to the contracted standards will initially be provided intensive technical assistance as part of a corrective action plan. If a local homeless system is not able to achieve reasonable performance improvement toward the State performance requirements, contracted funding will be reduced and redirected to higher performing communities. In all cases, Commerce and partner state agencies will remain engaged with communities to set reasonable performance targets based on actual performance in similar high performing systems while accounting for local circumstances.

In the summer of 2017, Commerce will combine the contracted system performance standards to set final statewide performance targets, and update the current estimate of the gap between existing resour-

Box 1.

We Strengthen Communities

The Department of Commerce touches every aspect of community and economic development. We work with local governments, businesses and civic leaders to strengthen communities so all residents may thrive and prosper.



Planning



Infrastructure



**Community
Facilities**



Housing



**Safety/
Crime Victims**



**Business
Assurance**

INTRODUCTION

es and the funding needed to ensure no person is left living outside.

The State's homeless response system for single adults and families is prioritizing people living outdoors or in places not meant for human habitation and people fleeing from domestic violence as priority populations for assistance. Commerce firmly supports that anyone who is living in an emergency shelter or in temporary housing (including couch surfing) needs permanent housing, and we need to ensure people most at risk of dying from violence or exposure to the outdoor elements receive assistance as rapidly as possible.

The joint work of the Commerce Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) team to address adult and family homelessness and the [Office of Homeless Youth](#) (OHY) to address youth homelessness are both complimentary and evolving. The partnership with the OHY and the CHG team is demonstrated through a collaborative work environment where staff shares plans, policies, data, and resources so that our impact is both broad and strategic. We are committed to working together to strengthen the State and county responses to unaccompanied minors, youth, young adults, adults and families experiencing homelessness.

State government agencies alongside local governments, nonprofits, faith based networks, advocates, public housing agencies, business communities, and philanthropic organizations need to work collectively and with urgency to support the high performing systems and programs with the best outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Homelessness is solvable and we must continue to learn from data, research, and experiential evidence to ensure resources are targeted toward effective and proven strategies.

Our work centers around promoting best practices, setting high level performance measures, critically reviewing data, and supporting innovative system change.

OUR VISION

No person left living outside.

OUR 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

- ▶ 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 evidence based.

For additional context for this Plan, see our [web page](#) which has links to the following articles:

- [Why is homelessness increasing?](#)
- [Counts of homelessness: What the different data sources tell us](#)
- [Overview of the homeless housing system: Funding, Interventions, and Numbers served](#)

SYSTEM WORK

The State of Washington promotes the mission, vision, and guiding principles by funding and supporting *homeless crisis response systems*.

Homeless crisis response systems respond to the immediacy and urgency of homelessness and make sure everyone has a safe and appropriate place to live. The system must also target and prioritize resources for people with the greatest needs so they are quickly "screened in" for housing assistance. *The goal of a high functioning system is to reach the balance between need and capacity, often referred to as functional zero,*

so that when a person becomes homeless there is an immediate system response that quickly moves that person back into housing.

A homeless crisis response system prioritizes providing people with housing first and then offers additional supports and voluntary services as needed. This evidenced based, national best practice approach yields higher housing retention rates, lower returns to homelessness, and significant reductions in the use of crisis service and institutions.

Box 2.

Core elements of a high performing homeless crisis response system capable of bringing everyone inside:

1. People living unsheltered are promptly identified and engaged.
2. Diversion strategies are used first to solve a housing crisis. Family and friends are engaged if the situation is safe and appropriate.
3. People are prioritized based on need, using a transparent and consistently applied coordinated entry process.
4. Access to housing and services is contingent on rules no more restrictive than typical leases.
5. Housing and service goals are client driven.
6. Clients are supported in developing housing stability plans that address client safety, barriers to permanent housing, and self-sufficiency.
7. Programs quickly move most clients into market rate housing, and stay available as requested to maintain housing stability.
8. Programs provide the minimum assistance needed to secure housing and only offer more when it is necessary to prevent a return to homelessness.
9. Programs should intervene with permanent supportive housing when clients have a disability that impacts their ability to live independently, and market-rate housing placements have proven ineffective in resolving their homelessness.
10. Programs share client data between systems as allowable to improve coordination of services.

SYSTEM GOALS

There are seven primary goals in Washington State’s work supporting the statewide homeless crisis response systems. These goals include strategies, specific actions, timelines, and connect to performance measures.

- **Goal 1:** Effective and efficient coordinated access and assessment for services and housing.
- **Goal 2:** Effective and efficient crisis response system as measured by cost per successful exit to permanent housing.
- **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.
- **Goal 7:** Increased investments in housing unsheltered families with children, unsheltered chronically homeless people, and preventing youth from exiting public systems to homelessness.

Goal 1: Effective and efficient coordinated access and assessment for services and housing.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

1.1 Improved implementation of coordinated entry and outreach.

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
1.1.1 Continue technical assistance to counties working to implement and refine their coordinated entry systems and tools.	On-going	Report from technical assistance provider
1.1.2 Continue to evaluate and score coordinated entry systems, including adding additional performance measures of coordinated entry, and accessibility.	Next round of evaluation in early 2018	Evaluated biennially by interdisciplinary team
1.1.3 Expand coordinated entry requirement for all homeless housing programs managed by recipients of, and sub recipients of, Commerce homeless funding.	Effective July 2017	Review during compliance monitoring

SYSTEM GOALS

Goal 2: Effective and efficient crisis response system as measured by cost per successful exit to permanent housing.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

2.1 Promote evidence-based housing interventions that efficiently move people experiencing homelessness into permanent destinations.

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
<p>2.1.1 Publish state, county, and project-level performance measures including the cost per successful exit to permanent housing destinations and rates of return to homelessness.</p>	<p>State and county performance measures published annually; new project level measures published in 2017</p>	<p>Posted to agency website</p>
<p>2.1.2 Align grant requirements with system performance measures and benchmarks.</p> <p>Local systems must meet or make at least a five percentage point improvement toward the following benchmarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 80 percent of exits from transitional housing and rapid-rehousing are to permanent destinations. • At least 95 percent of people served by permanent supportive housing are retained or exit to permanent destinations. • At least 50 percent of exits from emergency shelter are to permanent destinations. <p>Grants will also include additional performance requirements selected by communities from a menu of choices. Choices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time people remain homeless (90 days or less or a five percentage point improvement). • Percentage of people who return to homelessness after exit (less than 5 percent or a five percentage point improvement). 	<p>Application January 2017; Awards July 2017</p>	<p>Update to state Homeless Housing Strategic Plan to include contracted system performance standards</p>

SYSTEM GOALS

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in proportion of people provided prevention from populations at highest risk of becoming homeless, including people exiting institutions, living with family or friends, and history of homelessness (at least 80 percent or a five percentage point improvement). 	<p>Application January 2017; Awards July 2017</p>	<p>Update to state Homeless Housing Strategic Plan to include contracted system performance standards</p>
<p>2.1.3 Require systems receiving Commerce funds to use a service model that includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to and continued housing assistance should not be contingent on unnecessary conditions. • Initial and frequent re-assessment to solve housing crises with minimal services needed. • Individualized services responsive to the needs of each household. • Voluntary participation in supportive services. • Rapid exits to permanent housing. 	<p>Effective July 2017</p>	<p>Review during compliance monitoring</p>
<p>2.1.4 Require systems receiving Commerce funds to prioritize serving people who are unsheltered by 1) increasing the proportion of unsheltered served by 10 percentage points, or 2) functionally ending unsheltered homelessness for at least two subpopulations.</p>	<p>Effective July 2017</p>	<p>Review during compliance monitoring</p>
<p>2.1.5 Provide Trauma Informed Services, Mental Health First Aid, and additional Coordinated Entry training.</p>	<p>2016 - 2018</p>	<p>Procure trainers</p>
<p>2.1.6 Provide local homeless plan academy for county/local governments.</p>	<p>Fall 2017</p>	<p>Develop academy program</p>

SYSTEM GOALS

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
2.1.7 Provide direct technical assistance to counties wanting to convert transitional housing to the generally more efficient strategies of permanent supportive housing or rapid re-housing.	Begin in 2017	Procure technical assistance provider
2.1.8 Explore contracting 2019 funds competitively based on cost per successful intervention.	Fall 2017	Procure technical assistance provider
2.1.9 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.	Fall 2017	Develop policy memo for stakeholder feedback

Goal 3: Identification of policy changes and resources necessary to house all people living unsheltered.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

3.1 Improve data sharing.

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
3.1.1 Propose law and policy changes to support cross agency data sharing capacity.	On-going	Commerce, DSHS, Veterans, OSPI, and Interagency Council on Homelessness

SYSTEM GOALS

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

3.2 Develop annual unmet need estimate from counts, and match with reported costs data to derive an estimate of the costs and intervention types needed to house all people living unsheltered.

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
3.2.1 Administer the Balance of State annual Point-in-Time count of people experiencing homelessness. Collect and report statewide results.	Annually	Post to Commerce website
3.2.2 Supplement point in time count with count derived from matched administrative data collected by DSHS, Commerce, OSPI, and Veterans.	Twice annually	Commerce, DSHS, OSPI, Veterans Post to Commerce website
3.2.3 Develop count based on samples of robust coordinated entry systems.	Biennially	
3.2.4 Work with state agencies to determine the counts of people unsheltered whose housing is the direct responsibility of state agencies.	2017-2018	Interagency Council on Homelessness work plan Include recommendations in the Annual Report on Homeless Grant Programs
3.2.5 Estimate and publish cost of housing all unsheltered families with minor children and 50 percent of unsheltered chronically homeless people.	2016	Submitted in Commerce decision package to Governor

SYSTEM GOALS

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
3.2.6 Estimate and publish cost of housing all unsheltered people eligible for supportive services under the 1115 Medicaid waiver.	2016	Submitted in Commerce decision package to Governor
3.2.7 Update estimate of gap in resources necessary to leave no person living outside, based on contracted system performance targets and updated enumerations of people living outside.	Summer 2017	Update state Homeless Housing Strategic Plan to include updated resource gap calculations

Goal 4: Quantifying what would reduce the number of new people becoming homeless.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

4.1 Facilitate identification of policy and resource changes that would reduce the number of new people becoming homeless

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
4.1.1 Engage local governments and service providers to solicit ideas.	Complete in 2017	Commerce publishes response
4.1.2 Research and literature review of homeless intervention efficacy; comparison of homeless programs in similar states.	Complete in 2017	Commerce publishes response

SYSTEM GOALS

Goal 5: Transparent accounting of state and local recording fee funds.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

5.1 Publish county report cards

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
5.1.1 Compile data from HMIS, contract compliance, county auditors, spending, and other data sources to develop county reports cards.	Annually	Post to Commerce website

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

5.2 Publish spending and performance data for all projects funded by state and local recording fees

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
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

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

5.3 Ensure access to all homeless data

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
5.3.1 Require counties not able to export client data to the state homeless management information system by December 2016 to deploy the state HMIS. Provide technical assistance to all data integration counties from the Commerce HMIS team.	Effective July 2017	All statewide data available to Commerce July 2017

SYSTEM GOALS

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

5.4 Reduce administrative burden that does not directly contribute to effective use of state and local funding and promotion of best practices

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
5.4.1 Work with the Governor and Legislature to eliminate redundant and overlapping budget provisions in the Commerce budget that create administratively costly budget silos.	On-going	Include recommendations in the Annual Report on Homeless Grant Programs
5.4.2 Propose elimination of the 45 percent set-aside for private landlords and the associated audits and reporting.	On-going	Include recommendations in the Annual Report on Homeless Grant Programs
5.4.3 Identify state and federal compliance requirements that do not directly contribute to the State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan, and only invest resources in those requirements needed to meet legal requirements.	On-going	Include recommendations in the Annual Report on Homeless Grant Programs

Goal 6: Fair and equitable resource distribution.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

6.1 Staff development on system disparities

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
6.1.1 Identify training plan and expectations for staff development.	Begin in 2017	Staff complete training in 2018

SYSTEM GOALS

<i>Strategy to Fulfill Goal:</i>		
6.2 Examine system disparities		
<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
6.2.1 Identify components and timeframe for completing the work.	Begin in 2017	Staff produce draft findings and recommended strategies
<i>Strategy to Fulfill Goal:</i>		
6.3 Produce recommendations		
<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
6.3.1 Staff include remedies in the future State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan update.	Begin in 2017	Updated Plan includes remedies

Goal 7: Increased investments in housing unsheltered families with children, unsheltered chronically homeless people, and preventing youth from exiting public systems to homelessness.

<i>Strategy to Fulfill Goal:</i>		
7.1 Ensure that youth exiting public systems have a safe, stable place to go		
<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
7.1.1 Implement a risk assessment and referral process for youth in public systems of care. (Governor's Budget Request)	Start July 2017, complete June 2018	New and consistent risk assessments and referrals in public systems.

SYSTEM GOALS

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

7.2 Expand rapid rehousing efforts to serve an additional 435 unsheltered families each year

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
7.2.1 Increase Consolidated Homeless Grant spending for families by \$7 million for the 2017-19 biennium. (Governor's Budget Request)	Application for funds August 2017, Awards December 2017	HMIS records show an increase of at least 435 unsheltered families housed annually.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

7.3 Expand permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless families with children to serve an additional 240 families each year

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
7.3.1 Increase Consolidated Homeless Grant spending for chronically homeless families by \$7 million for the 2017-19 biennium. (Governor's Budget Request)	Application for funds August 2017, Awards December 2017	HMIS records show an increase of at least 240 chronically homeless families with children housed annually.

Strategy to Fulfill Goal:

7.4 Expand permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless single people to serve 83 persons each year

<i>Actions in Support of Strategy</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
7.4.1 Increase Consolidated Homeless Grant spending for chronically homeless families by \$2 million for the 2017-19 biennium. (Governor's Budget Request)	Application for funds August 2017, Awards December 2017	HMIS records show an increase of at least 83 chronically homeless single people housed annually.

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The State Advisory Council on Homelessness, the Interagency Council on Homelessness, and other statewide homeless advisory groups provided recommendations and guidance for the Plan.

- [Washington Low Income Housing Alliance](#), Homeless Advisory Council
- [Washington State Community Action Partnership](#)

- Commerce Consolidated Homeless Grant and Emergency Solution Grant Lead Grantees
- [State Advisory Council on Homelessness](#) is a governor appointed council with representatives from city and county governments, a youth and a domestic violence advocate, private business, federal government, public housing and philanthropic representatives, formerly homeless people, and a member of the state Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- [Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) agencies include the Department of Social and Health Services, Employment Security Department, Department of Veteran Affairs, Health Care Authority, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, Department of Health, Office of Financial Management, Department of Commerce, Department of Corrections, and the Governor's Office.



STATE OF WASHINGTON

HOMELESS HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN

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Department of Commerce