Morris County Continuum of Care
Strategic Plan 2024-2025

CoC MISSION: To develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address and prevent homelessness in Morris County.

COMMITTEE HISTORY: The Strategic Planning Workgroup was initiated in the summer of 2021, after the CoC Executive Committee saw a need to look critically at the full homeless service system, identify gaps and barriers and offer solutions and improvements to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring in Morris County. The workgroup completed an original two-year plan from 2022-2023 that was approved by the CoC Executive Committee in January of 2022. The Executive Committee also approved the creation of a Strategic Planning Committee at the same time, with the purpose of monitoring and editing the Strategic Plan throughout the implementation period.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE: The Strategic Planning Committee is a multifarious collective of invested stakeholders that promote a comprehensive and equitable approach to addressing homelessness in the community. The committee includes representatives from local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community members, individuals with lived experience of homelessness, healthcare professionals, and service providers that convene quarterly as a unified body.

Each member brings their expertise and perspective to contribute to the committee's overall strategic planning efforts to shape the future direction of the CoC and make a positive impact in the community.

The Strategic Planning Committee meetings are structured with an agenda that outlines the topics to be discussed. Together, members review progress, set goals, share updates, provide input on strategies, brainstorm ideas, and collaborate on action plans.

Member responsibilities may include actively participating in meetings, providing input and feedback on strategic planning initiatives, contributing to the development and implementation of goals and objectives, collaborating with other committee members, and ensuring alignment with the CoC's mission and vision.

The full committee may divide into work groups, tasked with various responsibilities to achieve the goals outlined in the community strategic plan. They may assign other CoC subcommittees with tasks that support the development of action plans and the implementation of strategies. These work groups play a crucial role in executing the committee's vision and ensuring its successful implementation.

VISION AND PRINCIPLES: The Strategic Planning Committee is guided by key values and beliefs that set the foundation for committee interaction and decision-making. Strategic Plan goals and objectives are determined in keeping with the following principles:

Housing First: The belief that safe and stable and affordable housing is a fundamental human right and that everyone should have access to it. Housing First programs have been proven effective in helping difficult to serve populations maintain housing and service engagement. Community solutions that work within the harm reduction framework and provide individuals experiencing homelessness with immediate access to housing will be prioritized.

Collaboration and Coordination: Strong relationships with community partners, service providers, and stakeholders to develop a coordinated and integrated approach to address homelessness. By leveraging partnerships and sharing resources, the CoC can maximize its impact and avoid duplication of efforts. Our goal is to foster a clear set of shared objectives in a system that responds efficiently and rapidly to the crisis of homelessness. It is imperative that the existing system be used more effectively to quickly assist households experiencing homelessness in obtaining stable permanent housing.

A key step in strengthening the system is in re-imagining the way in which programs and agencies relate to each other and collaborate. The collaboration among different agencies, organizations, and stakeholders to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing this population and providing housing solutions plays a large role in the success of system improvements.

<u>Person-Centered Approach</u>: Recognizing the unique needs and circumstances of individuals experiencing homelessness and tailoring services and support to meet those needs. A new focus must be placed on client-centered services achieved through understanding programs within the context of a homeless service system rather than outgrowth of individual agencies and their services.

People experiencing homelessness are at the center of the system design. Their views are sought out and their voices are welcomed. It's important to have representation from people with lived experience, which ensures that the Strategic Planning committee's decisions are informed by those who have firsthand knowledge of the issues at hand. Involving individuals who have personally experienced homelessness or have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by those who are homeless is key to the redesign of the system to ensure easy and streamlined access for everyone, particularly those who experience the greatest challenge navigating the complexities of publicly funded services and programs. This also includes the provision of opportunities for currently and formerly homeless individuals to share their story. By including their voices, planning bodies can gain valuable insights and ensure that their plans are grounded in the realities of those they seek to serve. This information will be used to help the community and various stakeholders better understand who the homeless of Morris County truly are.

<u>Equity and Social Justice</u>: Recognition that systemic racism and other forms of discrimination cause a disproportionate level of homelessness in communities of color, sex and gender minorities, people with disabilities, and other marginalized communities. Therefore, the Strategic Planning Committee is committed to approaching the planning process through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. This means actively considering and addressing the unique needs and experiences of individuals from different backgrounds, fostering an inclusive environment, and addressing and eliminating systemic barriers to ensure everyone has an equitable chance to access housing and support services.

<u>Data-Driven Decision Making</u>: Prioritization of the use of data to determine areas of opportunity in the homeless services system and to guide strategies, track progress, and make informed decisions about effective resource allocation and service provision. The Strategic Planning committee aims to focus on a narrow scope to lay the groundwork for system improvement. This means identifying specific areas within the system that require attention by measuring system AND program level performance and implementing targeted strategies to address them ensuring resources are used in a way that maximizes impact.

Overall, the vision and principles of the CoC Strategic Planning Committee revolve around inclusivity, collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and a focused approach to system improvement. By adhering to these principles, the committee can work towards reducing homelessness and improving the lives of individuals and families in need.

REPORT ON THE 2022-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN: The 2023-2024 Strategic Plan included 16 objectives assigned across various workgroups. The plan was designed to span multiple years and holistically move the CoC closer to ending homelessness by addressing a diverse array of concerns simultaneously. In the fall of 2023, the Strategic Planning Committee received updates from all implementation teams and completed the following analysis of the progress of the 2022-2023 plan.

The following objectives have been completed:
- Objective 2: create outreach and training plan for community.
- Objective 4a: complete a system map and funding stream analysis.
- Objective 4b: review gaps in services and make recommendations for further funding.
- Objective 7: create a process for ensuring families are not separated in accordance with each household's definition of family and each family member's self-reported gender identity.

- Objective 12: formalize relationship between neighbors in need and the CoC and determine how landlord engagement fits into overall CoC structure.
- Objective 15: create safe spaces and pipeline for people with lived experience and integrate people with lived experience into CoC.
- Objective 16: update CoC monitoring and application process to be data-driven and program specific.

The following objectives have been eliminated:
- Objective 3: determine a strategy/policy/process for how CoC members participate in advocacy work – this objective has been deprioritized. There are other organizations that lead and participate in advocacy work for homelessness populations. The CoC will find ways to collaborate with these organizations without creating an additional burden to the CoC infrastructure.
- Objective 6: work with childcare providers to increase access to home-based childcare settings – this initiative is still ongoing but is being led and monitored by Child and Family Resources. The CoC will continue to work closely with this organization.
- Objective 13: analyze eviction data and target solutions to communities with higher eviction rates – there is a dearth of available and relevant data regarding evictions in Morris County. Collection of this data will necessitate closer collaboration with the Morris County justice system and additional CoC data-focused resources that are unavailable at this time.

The Strategic Planning Committee has recognized significant progress among the remaining objectives and noted several lessons learned in the process. These lessons helped to inform the next iteration of the Strategic Plan for 2024-2025. For remaining objectives from the 2022-2023 Strategic Plan, the Strategic Planning Committee has determined to adapt them for the 2024-2025 plan to be more data-driven and more narrowly focused. Furthermore, the implementation teams should be comprised of key stakeholders with expertise and access to analytic data as needed. Otherwise, there may be an external entity more aligned to take ownership of the objective who can be engaged in the CoC and share updates. Lastly, the flow of communication is essential to align work for maximum impact and engagement. Establishing clear objectives, gathering CoC input, and integrating feedback from the Executive Leadership will ensure cohesion and foster success.

GOALS AND ACTIVITIES:
The Strategic Planning Committee works towards two major goals:
- Goal 1: Enhance CoC administrative capacity, operations, and coordination
- Goal 2: Consider innovative and strategic solutions to ending homelessness

In pursuit of these goals, the committee has defined specific activities of focus for the Morris County CoC in 2024-2025. In the chart below, each activity is defined and assigned to a particular implementation team who will apply their expertise to meet the objective. Goal 2 activities are also associated with various System Performance Measures (SPMs), mandatory system-level data elements reported annually, that allow HUD to understand how a CoC's entire system of homeless assistance is performing.

GOAL 1: Enhance CoC administrative capacity, operations, and coordination

	Activity	Implementation Team
1A	Prepare a plan for administrative support of the CoC • Training • Data evaluation • Administrative support (coordination, recording, communication, and evaluation) for all meetings • Coordinated entry oversight	CoC Executive Committee
1B	Policy development and review • Develop trainings required by CoC policies • Prepare a process that outlines policy and procedure development that includes the active solicitation of the voices of people with lived expertise and funded providers in decision making • Review bylaws to incorporate designated slots for PWLE into membership	CoC Executive Committee and CAS – Training
1C	Determine a list of priority municipalities based on income and homelessness data, create report/ presentation to collaborating groups (HSAC, Housing Alliance, Fair Housing Committee) with recommendations for municipal engagement	Permanent Housing
1D	Engage homeless liaisons from the three school districts (Morristown, Dover, Morris Plains) with the highest homelessness in CoC to improve access to McKinney Vento navigation and to ensure resources are available to liaisons when identifying homeless families	CAS – Youth Advocate
1E	Develop a process for increasing transparency of CoC-related data. • Identify what data should be shared with key stakeholders. • Identify the definition of "key stakeholder". • Determine frequency of and responsible entities for the production and analysis of these reports. Determine how reports will be disseminated so that key stakeholders have access to data.	Community Assistance Services, Data Governance, and Advisory Board Committee
1F	Create and facilitate a plan to position at the center *people with lived experience of housing crisis* in system planning and service delivery • Complete an assessment of the current state of the CoC to identify barriers to inclusion • Complete a literature review of national best practices for inclusion • Build a framework to provide a guideline and tools for CoC committees to use • Build a framework to provide a guideline and tools for CoC-funded providers to use	Advisory Board Committee and Partnership Team[1]

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[1] Partnership team is a workgroup to replace the existing DEI workgroup with the intent of establishing a partnership between the CoC, CoC-funded providers, and persons with lived experience to improve ultimate outcomes of people receiving services in CoC programs.

Goal 2: Consider Innovative and Strategic Solutions to Ending Homelessness

	Activity	Associated SPM	Implementation Team
2A	Engage Boonton Public Housing Authority in Coordinated Entry System	(1) Reduce length of time of homelessness	Permanent Housing Committee
2B	Develop a data-driven tool for programs to evaluate success in sustainability in permanent housing destinations post-discharge.	(2) Reduce returns to homelessness	Service standards workgroups
2C	Develop a process and associated tools for programs to utilize to prepare households for exiting to permanent housing through a housing stability plan that "centers" the needs and goals of individuals and families.	(2) Reduce returns to homelessness	Service standards workgroups
2D	Increase capacity of housing and supportive services provider workforce to work with program participants to increase earned income and sustainability of permanent housing. - Data - Terminology - National best practices - Local resources - Examine barriers including dependence on unearned income, lack of opportunities, eligibility criteria, etc. - Propose potential solutions to barriers	(4) Increase earned income for system leavers and stayers	CAS – Training
2E	Enhance eviction prevention and shelter diversion interventions. Specifically, leverage resources and increase community collaboration to engage households in sustainable housing solutions.	(5) Reduce number of first time homeless	CP Case Conferencing and CE Leadership Team
2F	Develop Diversified Shelter Plan to create an overall systems-level plan to address the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness and the many programs that are involved in that work.	(7) Increase exits to permanent housing	Diversified shelter planning workgroup

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