



INDIANA BALANCE OF STATE
continuum of care

Committed to Housing Every Hoosier

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Prepared by:



COLLABORATIVE
SOLUTIONS

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Introduction

In 2021, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) contracted with Collaborative Solutions, Inc. (consultants) to develop a strategic plan for the Indiana Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) (hereafter referred to as the CoC or IN-502). IN-502 stakeholders acknowledged the need for a strategic plan due to the expiration of the previous plan and the desire for short- to medium-term strategic direction and prioritization so IN-502 stakeholders can better navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the CARES Act influx of resources, and the affordable housing crisis.

IN-502 covers 91 counties, inclusive of the entire state except for Marion County and Indianapolis. IN-502 is divided into 16 Regional Planning Councils (RPCs), each with its own Chairperson, Point in Time (PIT) Coordinator, and Coordinated Entry Lead; these councils are responsible for engaging in local collaborative planning around homeless programming. As with most Balance of State CoCs that have a regional structure, the regions vary in participation, capacity, and size – some cover smaller but more densely populated and better resourced areas, while others cover larger geographic regions with fewer people, housing and service opportunities. Given the variety across the regions, the IN-502 Board is interested in determining how best to support the regional structure going forward.

IN-502 is governed by a Board of Directors representative of cross-sector stakeholder groups including homeless service providers, affordable and supportive housing professionals, education and foster care systems, veterans, mental health community, and county government. In 2022 the Board composition changed significantly with a large new class of Directors. As such, the Board is evaluating its role and focus, and the role and focus of IHCDA, which currently serves as the CoC's Collaborative Applicant, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead Agency, and Coordinated Entry Lead Agency. Determining roles and responsibilities within the CoC continues to be a topic of discussion for the Board, IHCDA, and the RPCs.

Given the current environment including the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and the impending significant funding reduction with the expiration of the CARES Act, the plan presented herein focuses on a shorter timeframe and includes more granular objectives than typical strategic plans. While many strategic plans focus on high level goals over a five-year period, the planning group mutually agreed that refining CoC needs and goals to a shorter time span, three years, and outlining clear objectives to accomplish during that time was the prudent planning approach given the uncertainty of the current landscape in homeless services.

Plan Development Activities

The strategic plan development for IN-502 relied on significant support from the Board of Directors as well as substantial information collection from CoC stakeholders including CoC funding recipients, the Collaborative Applicant, and Regional Coordinators.

Development of the Strategic Plan occurred in the following phases. Activities listed under each phase contributed content and ideas to the plan.

Phase 1: Board of Directors Preparation

- Established governance foundations in Board Orientation and Remote Gathering (discussion topics: Governance Structure and Overview of the State's Homeless Data Trends) in August 2021.
- Board member interviews with consultants to discuss CoC needs and strengths, and to provide direction for strategic plan focus.
- Received additional governance guidance in October 2021. A plan with actionable steps for the Board to execute was developed by consultants from this training.

Phase 2: CoC Stakeholder Outreach

- Consultants participated in a CoC Regional Chair call, conducted an online survey of Regional Chairs, and held focus group sessions with all CoC Regions to better understand the challenges facing people experiencing homelessness, region-specific needs, and which issues the CoC should choose as its focus going forward.

Phase 3: Onsite Strategic Planning Session of the Board of Directors

- Consultants met with the full Board of Directors and IHCD in Indianapolis in June 2022 to share all information collected from CoC stakeholders and further develop and hone the CoC's priorities for the next three years.

Ad Hoc Governance Committee Outcomes

During the October 2021 Board governance discussion, it was determined an ad hoc committee would be formed to address several governance issues in need of review. This committee, consisting of board members Lori Phillips-Steele, Lani Vivirito, Joe DeVito, Jarod Wilson, and Angie Ciski, met five times between March and May 2022 to discuss governance topics including a rotation policy, quorum, committee structure, and conflict of interest. The committee brought forth recommendations to the larger Board of Directors at the May 2022 meeting for adoption. The recommendations and context for each of these topics is below.

Prior Board of Directors Quorum Policy: 1/3 of all members in office when action is taken, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business at a meeting of the IN-502 CoC Board.

Recommendation for Board of Directors Quorum: A majority (51%) of all seated board members constitutes a quorum for the transaction of any business at a meeting of the IN-502 CoC Board. All actions of the IN-502 CoC Board shall be by a majority of the votes of those board members present, unless otherwise specified by these Bylaws. Votes can be cast in person and/or via telephone conference or other electronic means that permit two-way communication. There shall be no voting by proxy or other representative method.

*Adopted May 2022.

Prior Board of Directors Composition and Term Policy: The IN-502 CoC Board will consist of no more than 17 members. The Board members must include at least one (1) currently or formerly homeless individual, two (2) Regional Chair Representatives, five to seven (5-7) at-large members and representatives of the seven (7) HUD subpopulations (domestic violence, chronic substance abuse, youth, chronic homelessness, severely mentally ill, families, and veterans). One (1) board member shall represent an Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) entitlement city collaborative interest. All IN-502 CoC board members shall serve for a term of three (3) years except for the Regional Chair Representatives which shall serve for a term of (2) two years. The regional chair representatives must represent an organization in good standing with both IHEDA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are elected by the Chairperson of each Regional Planning Council by simple majority vote.

Recommendation for Board of Directors Term and Policy: Board members shall serve a 2-year term that is renewable for a second 2-year term, for a maximum period of service of 4 years. At that time, board members shall not be eligible to serve another term for a period of 2 years.

Current board members will finish out their existing term and then have the option to renew for a 2-year term. *Caveat:* If current board members are in Year 1 of a 3-year term, they are given the option to shorten the term to 2 years or keep the original 3-year term. Once the original term ends, all board members up for renewal would consider a 2-year renewal term.

*Adopted with change June 2022: board terms can be renewed 3 times, for a maximum 6-year period of service.

Prior Board of Directors Term and Rotation Policy: All IN-502 CoC board members shall serve for a 3-year term except for the Regional Chair Representatives which shall serve for a 2-year term. Board members can be elected to serve consecutive terms.

Recommendation for Regional Chair Terms: There are 16 regions and 2-year terms, so this would be a 4-region rotation, which would take 8 years for all regions to be represented on the board. The 4-region configuration will be co-developed by IHEDA staff and the IN-502 CoC Board to ensure geographic and population diversity.

*Adopted May 2022.

Prior Conflict of Interest Policy: If any matter should come before the CoC Board or any committee thereof in such a way as to give rise to a conflict of interest, the affected member shall make known the potential conflict and, if requested by the CoC Board or any Committee, withdraw from the meeting for so long as the matter shall continue under discussion, except to answer any questions addressed to the affected member. Should the matter be brought to a vote, the affected member shall not vote on it.

In the event that the member fails to withdraw voluntarily, the Chairperson shall require that (s)he remove himself/herself from the room during the discussion and vote on the matter.

Recommendation for Conflict of Interest: The existing policy will remain in place, with the following process adopted to ensure the policy is maintained.

1. Before any discussion of a topic requiring a vote there can be a 1-2 question questionnaire or review of the COI policy (to be determined jointly by IHEDA staff and the IN BoS Board of Directors). The individual who has the conflict is expected to recuse themselves and not be present for the discussion or vote. Failure to represent a conflict or potential conflict may result in removal by the committee chair.
2. No funded agency should sit on or chair the Funding and Resources Committee, as there are enough members of the Board who are not funded who can sit on the committee. However, a funded agency may be invited to the discussion as a subject matter expert or to provide additional context.

*Adopted May 2022.

No prior policy for Committee and Board Relationship

Recommendation for Committee and Board Relationship: There is a need to solidify the process of committee recommendations and the full Board of Directors. The recommendation for the process is the following:

- Committee discusses a measure/recommendation for the Balance of State CoC.
- If there is Committee agreement on a particular recommendation, this recommendation goes to the full Board of Directors as the first motion in the voting process.
- A second motion will need to occur in the Board of Directors meeting for the recommendation to move forward. This motion should come from someone who does not sit on the committee from which the first motion originated.
- If there is a second motion, then the Board of Directors will vote on the recommendation.

*Adopted May 2022.

Executive Summary

The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA), which serves as the Collaborative Applicant, HMIS Lead Agency, and Coordinated Entry Lead Agency for the Indiana Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC), contracted with Collaborative Solutions in 2021 to develop a strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. This plan focuses on short- to medium-term strategic direction and prioritization so CoC stakeholders can better navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, influx of resources through the CARES Act, and local conditions, including an ever-worsening affordable housing crisis.

Consultants engaged CoC stakeholders, including the Regional Planning Councils, Board of Directors, and IHCDA staff through a series of surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, virtual and in-person meetings over the course of a year to learn about the successes and challenges to prevent and end homelessness across the Balance of State. From these conversations, a series of five goals was developed, along with corresponding objectives and action items, that the CoC may implement over a three-year period. The goals are listed below.

1. Increase Affordable Housing Opportunities for People Experiencing Homelessness
2. Advocate for Resources to Support the Homeless Response System
3. Create a More Equitable Homeless Response System to Support and Elevate Minoritized People
4. Strengthen Internal Operations to Ensure Organizations and People are Supported Within the Homeless Response System
5. Rightsize and Refine Programs Across the Housing Spectrum for People Experiencing Homelessness.

The plan outlines foundational activities to complete prior to implementation of the strategic goals. These were included because several goals constitute new activities for the CoC and will require a committed investment in time and resources from CoC stakeholders, the Board of Directors, and IHCDA staff. Making time now for these foundational activities will be critical to the completion of the strategic plan goals over the next three years.

The ultimate goal of every CoC is to end homelessness. By focusing its efforts on the initiatives outlined in this strategic plan, the IN Balance of State CoC can move closer to this goal and look forward to a future where every Hoosier has a safe and decent place to call home.

Foundational Elements

The CoC Board of Directors identified multiple goals and objectives to improve CoC performance and to expedite successful housing outcomes for people at risk of and currently experiencing homelessness. Some initiatives outlined in this plan are new to the CoC, therefore the Collaborative Applicant, Board of Directors, and other CoC stakeholders would benefit from setting aside time to accomplish several foundational activities prior to plan implementation. The following information outlines the steps recommended to be completed by CoC stakeholders over the next six months before initiating the strategic plan. The list below includes steps integral to accomplishing larger initiatives outlined in the plan and should be prioritized.

- Discuss Board member ability and interest to engage in strategic plan objectives. *(Note: During board member interviews and the retreat it was noted the Board has not been actively engaged in strategic direction in recent years and has relied heavily on IHCD for this work. This plan reflects the Board's commitment to active engagement and participation to ensure objectives are accomplished.)*
 - Entity Responsible: IN BoS CoC Board
- Continue individual board member equity journeys, with the expectation that any knowledge gained, and lessons learned will be incorporated into the larger equity work of the board, the DEI Committee, and CoC.
 - Entity Responsible: IN BoS CoC Board
- Review Board of Directors' committee structure and determination if certain committees can become ad hoc or short-lived task forces rather than standing committees. This may facilitate active engagement in strategic plan activities.
 - Entity Responsible: IN BoS CoC Board, IHCD
- Discuss IHCD's limitations for advocacy and the role the Board of Directors and their agencies can play to support a future advocacy agenda.
 - Entity Responsible: IN BoS CoC Board, IHCD
- Review FY22 Continuum of Care (CoC) scoring criteria to evaluate whether edits are necessary to make scoring more equitable across the CoC and align with system priorities.
 - Entity Responsible: IHCD, IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Funding and Resources Committee)
- Review CoC project spending and develop a plan to address any projects unable to expend grant funds during the performance period.
 - Entity Responsible: IHCD

Goal 1: Increase Affordable Housing Opportunities for People Experiencing Homelessness

Context

The current state of affordable housing in Indiana mirrors national trends, with rising rental costs, limited housing stock, and many low income households on the precipice of homelessness. Over 215,000 households in Indiana have incomes at or below 30% of the statewide Area Median Income (\$21,988), which is categorized as extremely low income (ELI). These households include people experiencing homelessness and those whose sole income is [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI). Households at this income level typically need some form of subsidy to afford an apartment in the private market. However, stakeholders across Indiana shared that landlords in the private market have become increasingly unwilling to accept a Housing Choice Voucher or other subsidy for their units, which limits a household's ability to find a decent place to live. Another option for ELI households is units that are affordable in their price bracket, but there is a shortage of 135,033 rental units that are affordable and available for ELI households across the state. For those ELI households that are housed, 72% of them are considered severely housing burdened, meaning they are paying over 50% of their monthly income towards housing and utilities costs – a percentage that is not sustainable over time.¹

In every conversation conducted over the course of the strategic plan activities, stakeholders reported the lack of affordable housing as the primary issue in their communities. Additional concerns were the lack of landlords willing to work with people experiencing homelessness, fewer housing resources in rural areas, and the lack of movement through the homeless response system (i.e., people unable to access shelter or people remaining in shelter because of the lack of affordable housing). The following objectives reflect these concerns.

Objectives and Action Items

Objective 1: Develop a comprehensive and sustainable strategy to secure, maintain, and retain landlords willing to support people experiencing homelessness across Indiana.

- Timeline: 2023 – 2024

¹ Out of Reach Indiana (2021). Available at <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/indiana>.

Action Item: Determine Regional Coordinator and RPC role in securing, maintaining, and retaining landlords.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Regional Council Committee)

Action Item: Identify philanthropic organizations to approach for funding to support unrestricted Landlord Incentive and Mitigation Funds.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Funding and Resources Committee) with IHCDCA support

Action Item: Actively engage with statewide partners and build local capacity to develop relationships with landlords.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Funding and Resources Committee) with IHCDCA support

Action Item: Review need for a statewide CoC landlord liaison to support individuals experiencing homelessness and providers seeking landlord relationships.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Funding and Resources Committee), RPCs

Objective 2: Create a plan to increase resources for affordable housing development and access to rental assistance resources for households experiencing homelessness.

- Timeline: 2023-2025

Action Item: Identify and prioritize underutilized rental assistance and housing development resources for people experiencing homelessness according to the feasibility of statewide applications, funding request deadlines, and service efficiency. Create a timeline and action steps for securing resources.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Funding and Resources Committee or Ad Hoc Task Force, RPCs), IHCDCA

Goal 2: Advocate for Resources to Support the Homeless Response System

Context

Communities need comprehensive plans that include both federal and local funding to address the myriad needs of people experiencing homelessness. Through stakeholder discussions we learned that Indiana has invested state funds into supportive housing

projects (Housing Trust Fund), affordable housing development (Development Fund), and rental assistance (Housing First Program), and there are local projects such as land banks that provide opportunities for communities to create affordable and sustainable housing for households at lower income levels. Stakeholders noted that increasing state resources such as the Housing Trust Fund and Housing First Program would further existing efforts to prevent and end homelessness, and the CoC is the logical entity to advance an advocacy agenda and serve as a unified voice for the homeless response system with government entities. Stakeholders acknowledged that advocacy has not historically been the domain of the CoC, however, the effects of the affordable housing crisis warrant new funding sources and approaches to provide assistance on an unprecedented level across the state. Board members and focus group participants agreed the CoC will need to partner with other organizations that specialize in housing and service advocacy to maximize impact on legislative outcomes and minimize staff and volunteer time constraints for this work. The following objectives reflect a gradual progression into advocacy over the next three years.

Objectives and Action Items

Objective 1: Develop an advocacy agenda focused on securing additional funding to address issues related to homelessness.

- Timeline: 2023-2025

Action Item: Identify issues pertinent to people experiencing homelessness (ex. housing affordability, lack of affordable housing, landlord retention).

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board with input from RPCs

Action Item: Review federal and state funding plans to determine what resources can support projects serving people experiencing homelessness.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board

Action Item: Identify entities* engaged in advocacy related to the identified topics to determine if there are gaps or if efforts need to be strengthened. Seek out partnerships with advocacy organizations to leverage existing legislative efforts.

*Entities (not an exhaustive list): Board of Directors' agencies, state and local nonprofit organizations, advocacy organizations, etc.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board, CoC membership

Action Item: Raise awareness among CoC stakeholders of federal, state, and municipal bills pertaining to homelessness.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board

Goal 3: Create a More Equitable Homeless Response System to Support and Elevate Minoritized People

Context

National data demonstrate that Black, Indigenous and other People of Color disproportionately experience homelessness compared to their white counterparts. In response to growing awareness of the rates at which Black, Indigenous, People of Color and other minoritized communities are impacted by homelessness, COVID-19 infection, chronic health conditions, and access to care, HUD is asking communities to design and implement inclusive housing and service programs that seek to remedy historic discrimination in housing practices. All parts of the homeless response system should be guided and designed by voices of people with lived expertise of homelessness, and all decision-making bodies should ensure that Black, Indigenous, People of Color, people with lived expertise, and other minoritized voices are elevated in these spaces.

Although a majority of Indiana residents are white, HMIS data shows Black and African American individuals are overrepresented in the homeless system. Anecdotally it was shared that individuals who identify with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer community are also overrepresented in the system. What was discovered during stakeholder conversations was a lack of work occurring to address racial inequities and equity in general on a regional or statewide level. While the state has recently created an Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity, there is a lot of work needed within the homeless response system to address the overrepresentation of minoritized populations. The Board stated its intention to lead in the space of addressing racial and other inequities in the homeless response system and to amplify voices of people with lived expertise to improve processes and the system as a whole. The following objectives reflect the Board's intention to create a more equitable and representative homeless response system.

Objectives and Action Items

Objective 1: Develop an action-oriented plan to address systemic and institutional inequities for minoritized people experiencing homelessness.

- Timeline: 2022 – 2024

Action Item: Seat the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. The Board of Directors will develop a mission statement and committee objectives for adoption.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board

Action Item: Develop a working partnership with the Indiana Office of Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity (IOEOI).

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board

Action Item: Complete a racial equity analysis using HMIS data to better understand the impacts of historic and current inequities experienced by Black, Indigenous and other People of Color in the IN-502 homeless services system.

- Responsible Entity: IHEDA, possible subcontractor

Action Item: Implement strategies to solicit feedback from people with lived expertise of homelessness to inform CoC program design and implementation.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Regional Council), RPCs, IHEDA

Action Item: Conduct outreach to culturally specific agencies and organizations that serve Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and other minoritized communities for inclusion in CoC activities and to strengthen working partnerships regarding Coordinated Entry referrals, service provision, and other opportunities.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Regional Council), RPCs, IHEDA

Action Item: Refine the Coordinated Entry system (assessment tool, process, and prioritization scheme) by using the racial equity analysis information and feedback from persons with lived expertise to ensure the system is trauma-informed, person-centered, and ensures improved housing outcomes for minoritized persons.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Coordinated Entry Committee)

Action Item: Invest in equity training for CoC stakeholders to create a foundational understanding of equity challenges with the intended result of policy and practice design changes.

- Responsible Entity: IHEDA

Goal 4: Strengthen Internal Operations to Ensure Organizations and People are Supported Within the Homeless Response System

Context

The CoC is required to engage in activities to plan, implement, and evaluate projects and services in its efforts to prevent and end homelessness. As a Balance of State CoC divided into RPCs, a major challenge reported by CoC Regional Chairs and RPC stakeholders is the need for planning, organizing, and other administrative support to support required activities in their local communities. Many Regional Chairs serve full time roles in service provider agencies and also must ensure the obligations related to Coordinated Entry, Point in Time counts, meeting facilitation and training for their region are fulfilled. The Board of Directors agreed the following areas of improvement should be prioritized: consistency in how CoC requirements and general practices are implemented across the state, establishing a common understanding of the CoC and set of goals for the Balance of State, and ensuring accountability regarding participation in CoC activities.

As the Collaborative Applicant, HMIS Lead Agency, and Coordinated Entry Lead Agency, IHCD is responsible for the CoC's daily operations, including adherence to grant rules and regulations and compliance with all applicable HUD and other funding source requirements. Continued implementation of these activities will ensure the CoC meets its statutory requirements and serves those most in need across Indiana.

Objectives and Action Items

Objective 1: Provide intentional guidance, training, and technical assistance throughout IN-502 by interacting with and supporting the Regional Planning Councils.

- Timeline: 2022 – 2023

Action Item: Develop a plan to pursue additional funding sources to support RPC activities.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Regional Council and Funding and Resources Committees)

Action Item: Issue clarifying guidance on the required elements of the Coordinated Entry System and those that can be designed by region.

- Responsible Entity: IHCD

Action Item: Develop annual monitoring schedule and exhibit criteria for both CoC and ESG projects to comply with HUD and CoC requirements.

- Responsible Entity: IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: delegate this responsibility to IHCDCA)

Action Item: Develop metrics to evaluate active participation by HUD-funded programs in Coordinated Entry and implementation of Housing First. (Suggestion: complete in conjunction with monitoring exhibit criteria.)

- Entity Responsible: IHCDCA, IN BoS CoC Board

Goal 5: Rightsize and Refine Programs Across the Housing Spectrum for People Experiencing Homelessness

Context

As previously noted in this document, all IN-502 regions stated the affordable housing crisis affected the performance of multiple aspects of service and housing delivery. Focus group participants reported the length of time a person experiences homelessness and the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness for the first time has increased simultaneously, which is reflected in the aggregate HMIS data. One issue noted during the focus groups is individuals are remaining in shelter longer due to the lack of affordable housing options for families and individuals. This, in turn, limits shelter bed availability for individuals who become homeless, which perpetuates a crisis of individuals living unsheltered because there is no place to go.

Regional Chairs and service providers are interested in learning about creative shelter and housing solutions from peers and acknowledge training is needed across the state to develop a cohesive understanding of program requirements along with best housing and service delivery practices. Finally, focus group participants shared that diversion and prevention efforts to keep households out of homelessness are critical given the lack of flow through the homeless services system.

During the retreat, the Board of Directors reiterated concerns expressed by the focus groups about the importance of the homeless response system being able to support program participants' move out of homelessness. The Board concluded that IN-502 needs to rightsize the housing spectrum (emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing) in its entirety to better serve individuals experiencing homelessness. The

objectives below highlight actions that will impact the inflow to the homeless crisis response system. Objectives listed under Goal 1 to increase affordable housing opportunities support this goal by increasing the number of units where people experiencing homelessness can move.

Objectives and Action Items

Objective 1: Develop a statewide crisis response plan, inclusive of emergency shelter, temporary housing, prevention and diversion, with emphasis on equitable resource distribution across regions.

- Timeline: 2023 – 2025

Action Item: Identify service gaps in current crisis response activities and pursue funding to increase resources.

- Responsible Entity: IHCD, RPCs, IN BoS CoC Board (suggestion: Regional Council)

Action Item: Host a best practice training series for CoC stakeholders on the following topics: Diversion and Prevention Services; Low Barrier Emergency Shelter Practices; Permanent Housing Landlord Engagement and Housing First Approach to Services; supportive housing development process; Street Outreach practices.

- Responsible Entity: IHCD