



North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care

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Steering Committee Expansion and Improvement Proposal

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Background

The Steering Committee is the primary decision-making body for the Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC). The Steering Committee is currently made up of elected Regional Leads from each of the CoC's 13 Regional Committees. The Regional Committees also elect Alternates who fill in for the Regional Lead on the Steering Committee when needed.

Prior to 2017 the CoC had 26 Regional Committees and 26 Steering Committee seats. In January 2017 the BoS re-organized into 13 Regional Committees, cutting in half the number of people sitting on the Steering Committee. This restructuring provides an opportunity to add seats to the Steering Committee without creating an overly large committee. As outlined below, adding seats to the Steering Committee could improve CoC decision-making, build relationships with new systems, and expand CoC resources.

A workgroup of five members of the CoC¹, with help from NCCEH staff, met three times from February to April 2017 to explore whether and how to add seats to the Steering Committee. This document reflects the workgroup's recommendations for a plan to expand and improve the BoS CoC Steering Committee.

Summary

The workgroup identified three broad goals that changes to the Steering Committee could achieve:

1. Improve decision-making and strategy to improve CoC performance and future CoC applications
2. Build communication channels, capacity, and relationships within the CoC
3. Expand connections to new partners and funding sources

To achieve these goals, the workgroup proposes four types of changes:

1. Add at-large seats to the Steering Committee
2. Add a Funding and Performance Subcommittee and a Policy and Advocacy Workgroup
3. Enhance Steering Committee meeting content and the process for information-sharing
4. Develop additional training for Regional Leads and Steering Committee members

¹ Workgroup members:

Teena Willis - Partners Behavioral Health, Regions 3 (Uni5) & 4 (DISSY)

Melissa McKeown - Union County Community Shelter, Region 5 (Piedmont)

Monica Frizzell - Vaya Health, Region 1 (Southwest)

Latasha McNair - Eastpointe, Region 10 (Neuse)

Jim Cox - United Way of Pitt County, Region 12

The workgroup does not propose making any changes to the Regional Lead-held seats on the Steering Committee.

The workgroup recommends adding a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 13 “at-large” seats to the Steering Committee. At-large seats would be filled by people who do not directly represent any single Regional Committee. Under this proposal they would include people with lived experience of homelessness, representatives from North Carolina state government, and representatives from other partner sectors (health care, business, public housing agencies, domestic violence, legal services, and youth).

Adding such seats would accomplish each of the workgroup’s goals. Adding at-large seats would:

- Improve CoC decision-making by adding people to the Steering Committee with new expertise and outside perspectives;
- Increase participation in the CoC among service providers and other community stake-holders from other sectors; and
- Build connections to other systems (e.g. health care) and potentially additional funding or in-kind resources.

Enhancing the Steering Committee’s role in strategic decision-making for the CoC was a primary goal for the workgroup. Adding new seats would make progress toward this goal by tapping into the additional expertise and capacity of new members to aid Steering Committee decisions. Yet the workgroup also found that the Steering Committee faces other barriers to making strategic decisions:

- Steering Committee members do not have access to all the data and other information they might need.
- Members do not have time during meetings to have broader discussions or to evaluate the necessary data and information.
- Members may not have the knowledge or background to make such decisions.

To help solve these problems, the workgroup recommends:

- Adding a standing Funding and Performance Subcommittee that would collect and analyze CoC data to help inform the Steering Committee’s decisions.
- Shifting Steering Committee meeting agendas to cover more long-term and strategic discussions by moving regular updates into a board packet and moving some information-sharing to separate, audience-specific communication channels.
- Additional training for Steering Committee members to ensure that the Steering Committee has the knowledge to make more strategic decisions and to help Regional Leads better implement these decisions in their regions.

The workgroup also recommends adding a short-term Policy and Advocacy Workgroup to explore how the CoC or its members might engage more in advocacy. The workgroup identified advocacy as one way to expand resources for the CoC. However, the CoC must do additional research and planning to identify the best way to do so.



These recommendations also intend to increase transparency in CoC decision making and operations. Ensuring more time on Steering Committee agendas for strategic discussions will allow decisions with broad consequences to be more thoroughly considered, and as the Steering Committee meetings are always public, with the input of the full CoC. Moving information-sharing into audience specific calls and other modes of communication will convey information directly to whom it is most relevant, rather than requiring everyone in the CoC to attend one Steering Committee call, whether or not the full agenda is relevant to their work.

Detailed Recommendations

1. Steering Committee Seats

Summary

This proposal suggests adding at least 7 and up to 13 “at-large” seats to the Steering Committee. At-large seats are seats that are not elected by Regional Committees and do not directly represent any single Regional Committee. Under this proposal the Steering Committee, in total, would have between 20 and 26 seats: 13 Regional Committee seats (occupied by the Regional Leads, as it is now) and 7 to 13 at-large seats.

This proposal suggests the following types of people to fill at-large seats: people with lived experience of homelessness, representatives from North Carolina state government, and representatives from other partner sectors (health care, business, public housing agencies, domestic violence, legal services, and youth).

Adding people with lived experience to the Steering Committee would help the Steering Committee make decisions that are more informed by the people the CoC serves. Adding government agencies and other partners to the Steering Committee would bring a statewide perspective and expertise from other areas to help inform decision making, potentially connect the CoC to new funding and other resources, and build the capacity of the CoC as a whole.

Notably, this proposal includes seats for representatives from the domestic violence advocacy or services sector and the youth advocacy or services sector, but does not include seats that represent other homeless sub-populations, such as chronically homeless people or homeless families. The Steering Committee already includes multiple agencies serving these groups, so adding seats for these sub-populations would be duplicative.

This proposal groups the at-large seats into three categories, each with a minimum and maximum number of seats. Grouping at-large seats into categories gives the CoC flexibility over which agencies in each category hold seats. Minimum seats per category allow the CoC the option not to fill all possible seats if a suitable agency is not identified, while maximums per category ensure representation from different sectors on the Steering Committee.

The following proposal is written as governance charter language to illustrate how each option could be set into CoC policy.

Proposed language



The Steering Committee must have at least 7 at-large seats and may have as many as 13 at-large seats. At-large Steering Committee seats are elected by the other members of the Steering Committee and do not directly represent any single Regional Committee. At-large seats are allocated to three categories, as follows:

Category 1: People with lived experience of homelessness. Minimum 1 seat, maximum 2 seats. Representatives in this category cannot also occupy another seat on the Steering Committee (people holding other seats on the Steering Committee may also have lived experience of homelessness).

Category 2: North Carolina State Government. Minimum 3 seats, maximum 6 seats. Representatives must be from the following departments and must work with or oversee a program that serves people experiencing homelessness:

- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Public Safety
- Housing Finance Agency
- Department of Education
- Department of Military and Veteran Affairs
- Department of Commerce

Category 3: Other at-large seats. Minimum 3 seats, maximum 5 seats. Representatives can be from the following sectors:

- Health care sector, ideally with a state-wide focus
- Business sector, ideally with a state-wide focus
- Public housing agency
- Domestic violence services or advocacy sector, ideally with a state-wide focus
- Legal services
- Youth services or advocacy sector, ideally with a state-wide focus

At-Large Seat Selection Process and Terms

The Steering Committee would vote to approve at-large seat members in December. At-large members must recuse themselves from elections in which someone from their agency is considered. At-large seat terms would be one year, starting in January, which would keep all terms on the Steering Committee a consistent length.

2. Subcommittees and Workgroups

Summary

CoC governance ultimately falls to the Steering Committee, but smaller standing subcommittees and ad-hoc workgroups also contribute to CoC decision-making. Workgroups and subcommittees pool the expertise of a smaller group of people to focus on specific issues or initiatives to help the Steering Committee make more informed decisions. Therefore, this proposal to restructure the Steering Committee also suggests changes to the workgroup/subcommittee structure.

The BoS CoC has traditionally used the term “subcommittee” to identify groups that meet regularly or



have an on-going purpose and “workgroup” to identify short-term groups convened to finish a specific task. These same terms are used in this proposal.

The following proposal adds a standing Funding and Performance Subcommittee. This subcommittee would meet regularly to keep track of how the CoC is performing throughout the year and how CoC performance could affect future funding. It would analyze relevant data including, but not limited to, system performance measures, progress toward ending homelessness among subpopulations, and resource allocation. This subcommittee would assist the Steering Committee to set goals and priorities for the CoC and to make funding decisions.

This proposal also includes a new workgroup that would explore how the CoC or its members might engage in advocacy, which was a sub-goal identified by the workgroup as part of the goal to expand resources. Increasing advocacy capacity would require training, additional knowledge, and structure. The new workgroup would explore how the CoC or its members could engage in advocacy and how to implement a training framework to ensure effective advocacy.

All Steering Committee members (as well as all CoC members) are encouraged to join subcommittees and workgroups. At-large members’ participation would add expertise and capacity that would improve these groups’ effectiveness and help ensure other Steering Committee members are not over committed. At-large membership on the Scorecard and Project Review Subcommittees, in particular, would significantly enhance their work but would change these subcommittees’ membership. Both subcommittees have previously been made up of one representative per Regional Committee, selected annually. This proposal suggests allowing at-large Steering Committee members to join these subcommittees, up to but not exceeding the number of Regional Committee representatives each year.

Current standing subcommittees:

- Scorecard Subcommittee
- Project Review Subcommittee
- Veteran Subcommittee
- Coordinated Assessment Council

Proposed new standing subcommittee:

- Funding and Performance Subcommittee
 - The purpose of this subcommittee is to track the CoC’s performance as a whole throughout the year, to recommend funding priorities, and to increase the CoC’s competitiveness for funding.

Current workgroups:

- Steering Committee Restructure Workgroup
- Funding Priorities Workgroup

Proposed new workgroup:

- Policy and Advocacy Workgroup



- The purpose of this short-term workgroup would be to explore how the Balance of State CoC and/or CoC members could engage in local, state, and Federal administrative and legislative advocacy. It will make recommendations to the Steering Committee and/or NCCEH.

3. Meeting Content and Information Sharing

Summary

Steering Committee meetings are currently the primary way that information is shared throughout the CoC. Due to the high volume of information that needs to be shared among CoC members, including information related to funding and compliance, federal and state policy, and regular CoC business, Steering Committee meetings have little time for longer-term or strategic discussions.

The following proposal suggests a system to allow the Steering Committee more time to consider broader issues facing the CoC while still ensuring that all information is shared in a timely manner with those that need it.

Proposal

Three business days prior to the Steering Committee meeting, NCCEH staff will distribute a board packet that will include small updates and minor decisions. The board packet will also include regular updates from subcommittees, including data updates from the new Funding and Performance Subcommittee.

The Steering Committee will approve the board packet as a whole, after discussion if needed, by common consent at each meeting. This process will significantly streamline the minutiae of CoC governance, although it requires more time from Steering Committee members outside of the regular meetings to read the board packet before the meeting. Steering Committee members will be expected to share any relevant information from the board packet with their regions. Board packets will also be posted on NCCEH's website after each Steering Committee meeting.

NCCEH staff, with the help of the Steering Committee, will replace much of the information-sharing that happens on the Steering Committee calls with more audience or topic-specific calls and webinars, including, but not limited to, regular CoC-grantee calls. The Coordinated Assessment Exchange call is an example of this type of audience-specific call. NCCEH staff will also develop a regular email newsletter to communicate with the whole CoC.

4. CoC Leadership Capacity Building

Proposal

NCCEH staff will develop, with the help of the Steering Committee, training opportunities for Regional Leads and for Steering Committee members.

Under the new Regional Committee structure, Regional Leads must lead larger areas with more organizations, and HUD rules have put more responsibility on the CoC in recent years. Additional training for Regional Leads will give them the tools and knowledge to be effective leaders and to implement HUD and CoC policies and procedures.



Training for Steering Committee members will build a foundation of knowledge so the Steering Committee can make long-term and strategic decisions. To make such decisions, Steering Committee members will need a working knowledge of HUD and other funding sources, including their rules and regulations; CoC governance; homelessness policy and best practices; and the NC Balance of State CoC's structure, policies, and history. To start, an orientation packet will be developed for all Steering Committee members.

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