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Commissioners' Agenda Action Sheet

Meeting Date: April 28, 2026
Subject: Adoption of the 2025-2030 Benton County Local Homeless Housing Plan ~ K. Sullivan
Presenter: Kyle Sullivan
Prepared By: Deena Horton
Reviewed By: Kyle Sullivan
PA Review: **Approved:** No **Denied:** No **N/A:** Yes
(If denied, include reasoning)

Type of Agenda Item: Scheduled Business

Summary / Background Information

The Washington State Department of Commerce, under RCW 43.185C.050, requires counties to develop a 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan that aligns with statewide goals and guidance. The purpose of this plan is to provide a coordinated roadmap for state and county efforts to reduce homelessness, strengthen local crisis response systems, and guide the use of available resources. Each plan must include measurable performance targets and timelines aimed at reducing or eliminating homelessness within the county's jurisdiction.

To support development of this plan, the Human Services Department contracted with The Cloudburst Group. A local planning committee was established with representation from cities, individuals with lived experience, nonprofit organizations with low-income housing expertise, public health, housing professionals, and other key partners.

Fiscal Impact

None

Recommendation

Adopt the 2025-2030 Benton County Local Homeless Housing Plan

Suggested Motion

I move to adopt the 2025-2030 Benton County Local Homeless Housing Plan

Signatures Required on Agreements/Contracts

Resolution

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RESOLUTION

Benton County Resolution No. 2026-244

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BENTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON;

IN THE MATTER OF ADOPTING THE 2025-2030 BENTON COUNTY LOCAL HOMELESS HOUSING PLAN

WHEREAS, the Washington State Department of Commerce, under RCW 43.185C.050, requires counties to develop a 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan that aligns with statewide goals and guidance; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this plan is to provide a coordinated roadmap for state and county efforts to reduce homelessness, strengthen local crisis response systems, and guide the use of available resources; and

WHEREAS, each plan must include measurable performance targets and timelines aimed at reducing or eliminating homelessness within the county's jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, to support development of this plan, the Human Services Department contracted with The Cloudburst Group. A local planning committee was established with representation from cities, individuals with lived experience, nonprofit organizations with low-income housing expertise, public health, housing professionals, and other key partners; **NOW, THEREFORE**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Benton County Commissioners hereby accepts the proposed 2025-2030 Benton County Local Homeless Plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the term of the attached 2025-2030 Benton County Local Homeless Housing Plan commences on date of execution and shall expire on December 31. 2030.

Dated this 28th day of April, 2026

DocuSigned by:
Michael Alvarez
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Chair of the Board

DocuSigned by:
Will Mckay
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Chair Pro Tem

DocuSigned by:
Jerome Delvin
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Commissioner

Constituting the Board of County Commissioners
of Benton County, Washington

Attest: DocuSigned by:
Amanda Pearson
34825A375E0844E...
Clerk of the Board

cc: Human Services; Benton County Commissioners K. Sullivan

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Benton County Local Homeless Plan

2025-2030

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan outlines strategies to reduce homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties, Washington. Stakeholders from across the community, including residents currently experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness, had the opportunity to participate in the development of this plan (for a full description, see Appendix C: Stakeholder Participation). Informed by this community-driven process, this plan documents the goals, strategies, activities, performance measures, and timelines to reduce homelessness, with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness in both counties, consistent with the 2025–2030 Local Homeless Housing Plan Guidance provided by the Washington Department of Commerce.

Background

Washington State law requires that each homeless housing task force develop and recommend for adoption to its government legislative authority a five-year homeless housing plan for its jurisdictional area[1]. This plan meets the requirements for Benton County, Washington and includes information for Franklin County, Washington, as the two counties operated under an intra-county agreement during the time the plan was created. To meet this requirement, Benton County Human Services contracted with The Cloudburst Group, a mission-driven consulting firm, to commission this local homelessness plan. Jointly, The Cloudburst Group and Benton County Human Services staff formed an advisory group and conducted data review, interviews, listening sessions, and surveys to analyze the current state of homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties and to solicit broad feedback on strategies described in this plan.

This plan was created in line with the mission of the local Continuum of Care (CoC) committee, which is to provide a strong and supportive continuum of care system for at-risk and homeless individuals and families that will reduce and help prevent homelessness; provide access to affordable, stable, and decent housing and promote achievement of the highest possible level of self-sufficiency.

Overview of the Local Homelessness Plan

This plan provides details on the data collected and analyzed, background information on the context of homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties, current service levels, current funding and resources to address homelessness and housing insecurity, estimates of emergency and permanent supportive housing needs, and the prioritization criteria for future capital projects. The plan includes the five overarching goals determined by the state and local strategies for addressing these goals. These are:

1. **Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system:** This will be accomplished through establishing a lived experience advisory group for the CoC,

[1] RCW 43.185C.050, RCW 43.185C.160

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providing updated and accessible information on available services, strengthening public engagement, building outreach capacity, enhancing coordination on encampment abatement, and partnering with the business community.

2. **Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce:** This will be accomplished through establishing partnerships for internships and service learning, continuing peer support engagement, improving education and training, and, if possible, establishing incentive structures for homeless services employees.
3. **Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible:** This will be accomplished by providing wrap-around services for at-risk households, incentivizing affordable housing development, strengthening landlord mediation, establishing diversion and problem-solving efforts, and emphasizing job readiness and placement in case management.
4. **Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm:** This will be accomplished by fully implementing coordinated entry core elements, strengthening partnerships for disability needs, developing policies for families and other special populations, engaging in case conferencing, and coordinating with transit providers.
5. **Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs:** This will be accomplished by creating low-barrier shelter options, implementing innovative housing models like cottage communities, providing housing navigation support, strengthening stability case management, streamlining application procedures, and creating written standards for every program.

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PLANNING PROCESS METHODOLOGY

Washington State law requires that each local homeless housing task force develop and recommend to its local government legislative authority a five-year local homeless housing plan for its jurisdictional area. Consistent with guidance published by the Department of Commerce, this local plan outlines goals, strategies, outcome measures, and timelines to eliminate homelessness within the planning area, which encompasses both Benton and Franklin Counties.

This plan is the result of in-depth data analysis from all corners of the Benton-Franklin community. Leaders from across government, the nonprofit community, homeless service providers, healthcare providers, victim advocates, and other community members agree that the community needs to take comprehensive action to meet the needs of those currently experiencing and those at risk of experiencing homelessness and to address the challenge in a coordinated, effective way. To realize this vision, the community conducted comprehensive data collection between June and November 2025. Each activity is described in further detail below.

Administrative Data

Benton County Human Services, in consultation with the advisory group for this plan, analyzed the data collected as part of routine grant administration and program operations. A primary data source for this analysis was 2024 calendar year information from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a database required for many homelessness programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that includes the demographics of people served and the outcomes of those services. The plan also relies on the Golden Report published by the Department of Commerce, which details expenditures and bed counts. Other local funding information is captured in section 3. Where appropriate, all data sources are cited throughout this strategic plan.

Lived Experience Interviews

Benton County Human Services and its partners value the input and expertise of people who have received homeless services. To ensure their perspectives were included in this planning process, in August 2025, The Cloudburst Group interviewed 16 individuals who were currently homeless, had recently experienced homelessness, or were at risk of homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties. Questions were focused on experiences with local services and opportunities to improve outcomes. In accordance with state equity guidelines, the team compensated people with lived experience with a $20 gift card for their time and input. Appendix D includes detailed information on the demographics of participants and themes from these interviews.

Listening Sessions and Partner Interviews

From August to November of 2025, Benton County Human Services conducted interviews and listening sessions with homeless service providers, supportive services providers (e.g., medical

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services), and partners outside of homeless services that were nonetheless in contact with those experiencing housing instability, such as the public library. Questions included recommendations for addressing equity, supporting homeless services staff, preventing homelessness, prioritizing assistance, and maximizing stable housing placements. Appendix E includes more detailed information on this engagement.

Community Survey

To collect broad feedback on the strategies developed by the advisory group, members conducted a broad community survey to prioritize actions, solicit new ideas, and provide an opportunity for feedback on the planning process. This survey received 59 responses and informed the final version of this plan. Appendix A contains a full summary of the survey and responses.

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BACKGROUND

Homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties

Benton County Human Services administers homelessness services for both Benton and Franklin Counties, with the primary service hub located in Kennewick, Washington. Though part of the Washington Balance of State CoC, Benton County has a local CoC committee and operates a coordinated entry system to serve people experiencing homelessness. The following data provides an overview of the scope of homelessness and homeless programs in Benton and Franklin Counties using data from multiple sources.

Scope of Homelessness

According to annual point-in-time estimates, there has been a decrease in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties in recent years, though these counts are often considered an underestimate of the true extent of homelessness. However, from 2024 to 2025, homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties decreased at a lower rate than improvements statewide. In 2025, over one-third (35 percent) of those counted in Benton and Franklin Counties were living unsheltered.

Table 1: Homelessness and Change Over Time

Year	Total Number of People Experiencing Homelessness				Percent Change in Homelessness from Previous Year	
-	Benton County	Franklin County	Benton-Franklin Total	Rest of Washington	Benton-Franklin	Rest of Washington
2025	91	33	124	22,049	-13%	-27%
2024	95	48	143	30,897	-5%	+53%*
2023	126	25	151	20,248*	-30%	-20%*
2022	202	13	215	25,237	-	-

Data Source: *Washington Department of Commerce Point-in-Time Reports, 2022–2025*

***Note:** King County, which has a large proportion of people experiencing homelessness in Washington State, did not participate in the 2023 unsheltered point-in-time count, likely impacting overall state totals substantially.*

The Washington Department of Commerce produces the Snapshot report, which is an alternate count of homelessness. According to Snapshot data, homelessness in Benton County has dropped slightly from post-COVID highs, while it has continued to increase in Franklin County. In both Counties, the number of people at-risk of homelessness or experiencing other housing instability has continued to increase. The Snapshot data includes self-reported housing status from a variety of programs, including Medicaid and Economic Services. It is important to note that all those counted in this

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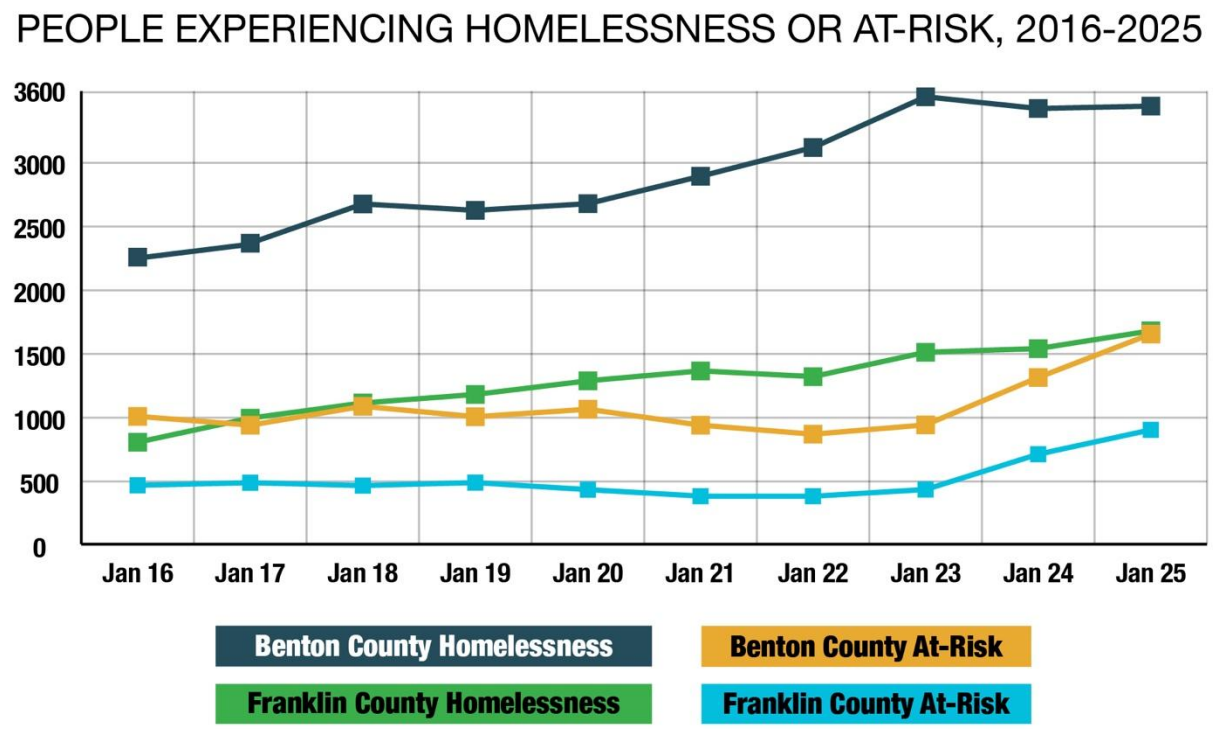
report may not be eligible for all homeless service programs, as eligibility criteria for CoC programs have a different definition of homelessness[2].

Figure 1: People Experiencing Homelessness and At-Risk of Homelessness, 2016-2025



Data Source: *Washington Department of Commerce Snapshot Reports, 2016–2025*

Across both Benton and Franklin Counties, the majority of people experiencing homelessness are in households with only adults present. However, over one-third of those experiencing homelessness are in households with both adults and children. Shelter options in the area for families are extremely limited, particularly for those whose children are a different gender than themselves (e.g., a mother with a son).

[2] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Homelessness Categories

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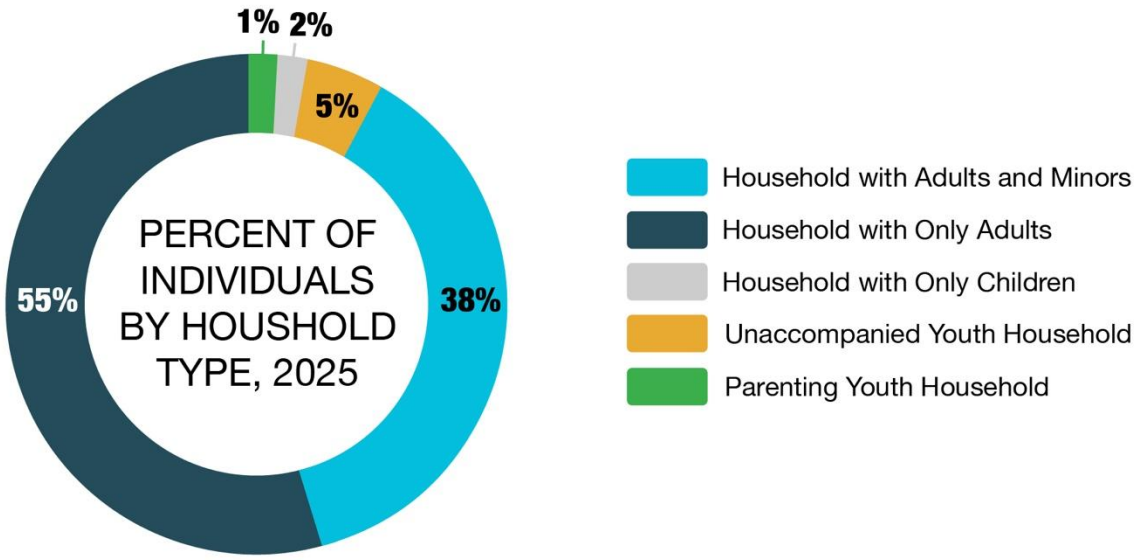
Figure 2: Household Types Experiencing Homelessness



Data Source: *Washington Department of Commerce Point-in-Time Reports, 2025*

School districts also help to identify and serve students and their families experiencing homelessness. This includes a broader definition of homelessness compared to other federal programs, including those who are couch-surfing or experiencing other forms of ongoing instability. The school districts fully within Benton and Franklin Counties identified 988 students experiencing homelessness in the 2024-25 school year, over half of whom attended school in Kennewick. There are likely additional students not included in this count as several other districts are partially within the county boundaries and two districts (Star and Paterson) did not have data available.

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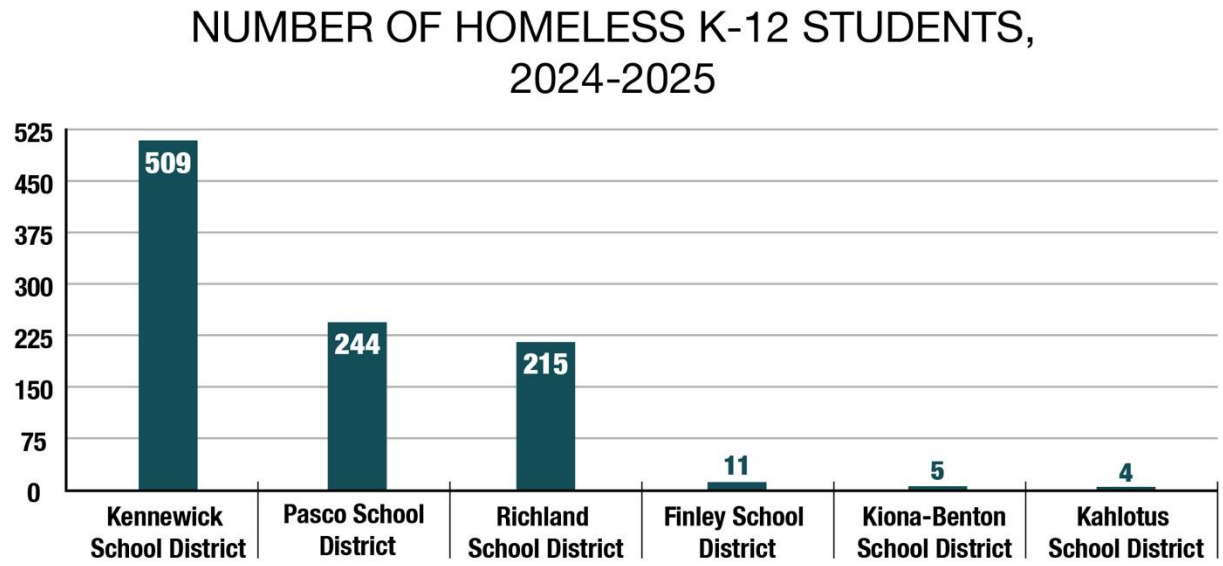
Figure 3: Homeless K–12 Students



Data Source: *Washington Office of Superintendent Public Instruction*

The next section details Benton and Franklin Counties' approach to further addressing homelessness. These approaches build on current practices and address gaps in the region.

SECTION 1: PLAN OBJECTIVES

To address homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties, this plan addresses the five objectives that were established in the 2024–2029 Washington State Homeless Housing Strategic Plan and are required to be included in local Five-Year Homeless Housing Plans. Each objective is detailed below, including specific local actions, performance measures, and timelines for implementation. These were developed through listening sessions, interviews, and the community survey, each of which is detailed in the appendices.

These strategies are focused on what is under the purview of Benton-Franklin Human Services, specifically the Housing Resource Center (HRC), and the funds they administer. While the HRC is firmly acknowledges the need for additional affordable housing development, this would be under the jurisdiction of cities within Benton and Franklin Counties. The plan has set forth ways for HRC to be a partner and provide information to localities wishing to further invest in transitional, supportive, and permanent affordable housing. Similarly, the HRC nor Benton-Franklin Human Services do not control Public Housing Authority funding within our jurisdiction. The HRC seeks to partner with housing authorities, improving coordination across Benton and Franklin Counties. The funding received by the HRC often has specific requirements, including income limits, eligibility criteria for programs, and time limits. The strategies proposed here seek to work within these requirements while maximizing impact.

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Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system

Benton County Human Services regularly reviews data to identify and address racial disparities in homelessness services. Compared to the percentage of people in poverty, both Black and White Benton-Franklin residents are overrepresented in homelessness, meaning they compromise a higher proportion of people within HMIS than in the local population. This data will continue to be reviewed at least annually by the CoC. Benton County Human Services currently leads homelessness outreach to try to engage service-disconnected populations, build trust, and inform people of local resources.

Table 2: Homelessness, Poverty, and Population by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of People in HMIS	Percentage of People in Poverty	Percentage of People in Counties
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	0.8%	1.3%	0.5%
Asian or Asian American	1.0%	1.0%	2.6%
Black, African American, or African	6.3%	1.6%	1.4%
Hispanic/Latina/e/o	25.9%	37.0%	33.5%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.9%	N/A	N/A
Multiracial	21.7%	26.0%	4.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1.2%	<0.01%	0.2%
White	42.1%	22.6%	57.0%

Data Sources: *HMIS 2024, Census 2020, American Community Survey 2023 Five-Year Estimates*

****Note:*** *Census data does not include detailed data for Middle Eastern or North African persons. Percentages do not add to 100 percent due to other categories and missing data.*

To further strengthen the equity, accountability, and transparency in the homelessness response system, Benton and Franklin Counties will undertake the following actions.

1.1 ESTABLISH A LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY GROUP FOR THE COC.

To further promote an equitable and accountable homelessness response system, the local CoC will establish a Lived Experience Advisory Group as a venue for people most impacted by homelessness

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services to have a voice in governance, policy, and funding decisions. This will begin by forming an official subcommittee and the current governing body developing a draft charter that outlines the scope of responsibilities for the group to promote transparency and clear lines of communication. Sample charters the community may consider to model after include:

- San Mateo County
- Multnomah County
- Lake County

Table 3: Timeline of Strategy 1.1

1.1 ESTABLISH A LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY GROUP FOR THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

Performance Measure: A Continuum of Care subcomittee is established and seated by June 2027 | Lead: Continuum of Care | Partners: All partcipating agencies

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
CoC reviews examples of how lived experience subcommittees are structured in other communities	●																		
CoC drafts charter and other governance documents to clarify roles and responsibilities of lived experience subcommittee		●	●																
CoC vote on formally establishing subcommittee				●															
Subcommittee is seated					●														
Subcommittee meaningfully participated in CoC governance						●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

1.2 PROVIDE UPDATED, ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION ON SERVICES THROUGH 211.

Benton and Franklin Counties currently have several outlets for lists of resources, though some of these are assembled by volunteer groups or other unofficial sources. Additionally, many of these resource lists are out of date. Rather than updating several lists, which was noted as confusing by people experiencing homelessness, Benton County Human Services and the CoC will undertake an organized effort to ensure all resources are available on 211 and providers update for accuracy at least twice per year. Washington 211 is a free and confidential service available by phone and online to assist in navigating health and human services resources. Information, such as QR codes, will be distributed by the CoC to partners and volunteer groups so they are aware that there is an updated, centralized resource list. The community may consider modeling online updates after Murray, Kentucky or developing searchable 211 websites such as those in Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

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Table 4: Timeline of Strategy 1.2

1.2 PROVIDE UPDATED, ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION ON SERVICES THROUGH 211

Performance Measure: Information is updated in 211 by January 2027 and reviewed at least twice annually | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: United Way, all local service providers

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Determine a method for standardizing collected information on available services	●																		
Engage in outreach to update services in 211		●	●																
New QR codes, flyers, or other notice are sent to community partners to inform them of new resource list				●															
Twice annually outreach is conducted to maintain information updates					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

1.3 STRENGTHEN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION THROUGH COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS, HOMELESSNESS "OPEN HOUSES," AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

Benton County Human Services, supported by the outreach coordinator, will hold at least once-annual presentations on homelessness to city councils in Richland and Kennewick, with invitations to also present at Benton City, West Richland, Pasco, and Prosser, where the public can receive information about current efforts to find and maintain stable housing for all residents. This will support transparency and keep the community informed about local efforts. Additionally, in partnership with the CoC, organizations able to hold an "open house" will do so at least annually so the community can meet with homelessness service providers and learn more about efforts to address homelessness. Such efforts have been successful in cities including Vancouver, Washington, Nashua, New Hampshire, and Palm Springs, California.

Table 5: Timeline of Strategy 1.3

1.3 STRENGTHEN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION THROUGH COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS, HOMELESSNESS "OPEN HOUSES" AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Performance Measure: By June 2027 the first public engagement will be held and twice annually thereafter | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: CoC, City Councils, Service Providers

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Coordinate with City Councils on presentation timelines	●	●																	
Collaborate with CoC and service providers on presentation content and capacity for "open houses"			●	●	●														
Begin holding twice annual public engagement activities						●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

1.4 BUILD THE CAPACITY OF OUTREACH TEAMS TO COMPLETE INTAKES OR ASSESSMENTS.

Currently, most clients need to come in person to the office to complete initial intake assessments. This can lead to congestion issues in the building and pose barriers for people who do not arrive very early. Additionally, limited seating in the line can pose accessibility issues for people unable to stand

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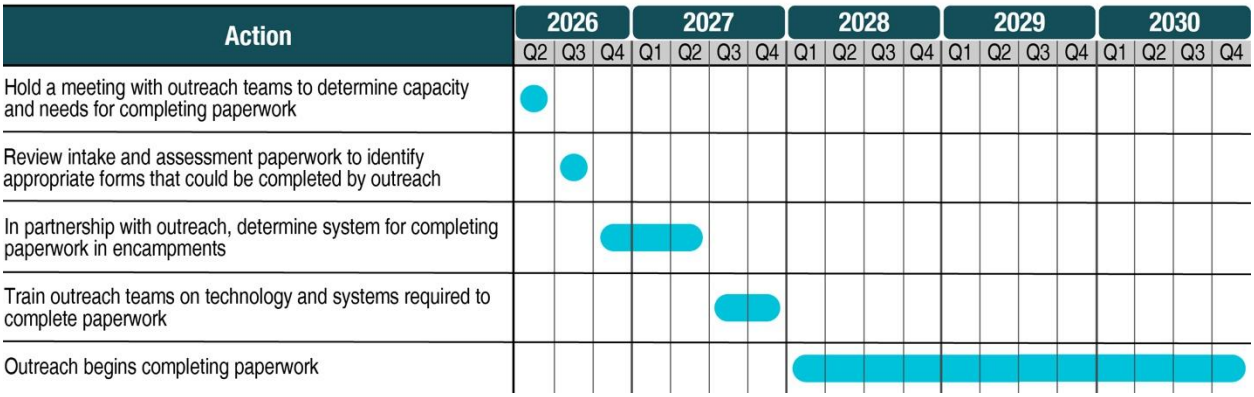
for longer periods of time. Exploring opportunities with technology, such as the use of tablets, and adding capacity to the outreach teams to complete basic forms, may expedite the process for obtaining housing and services and promote greater system transparency, in addition to reducing the length of time people spend without housing or in shelter due to expedited administrative processes. Benton County Human Service's outreach coordinator will lead this strategy.

Table 6: Timeline of Strategy 1.4

1.4 BUILD THE CAPACITY OF OUTREACH TEAMS TO COMPLETE INTAKES OR ASSESSMENTS

Performance Measure: By 2028 the outreach teams will be able to complete basic intake information for unsheltered clients | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: Richland Fire, Richland Parks, Cities of Kennewick and Pasco, other outreach agencies



1.5 COORDINATE WITH RELEVANT PARTIES, INCLUDING LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS, ON ENCAMPMENT CLEARANCES TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE SHELTER AND HOUSING AND TO REDUCE HARM.

Encampments are often cleared with no notice to the people who live in them. This can result in the loss of important documents and other personal effects necessary to obtain housing, slowing the process down for impacted individuals and resulting in trauma that can lead to mistrust in the service system. The Benton County Outreach Coordinator will work to coordinate with police, parks staff, and other relevant parties to have service providers present, to the maximum extent possible, during clearances to allow people to preserve documentation and other important personal effects, allowing providers to identify possible alternatives to living unsheltered. One model for consideration is the encampment coordination system in Dallas, Texas.

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Table 8: Timeline of Strategy 1.5

1.5 COORDINATE WITH RELEVANT PARTIES, INCLUDING LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS, ON ENCAMPMENT CLEARANCES TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE SHELTER, HOUSING AND REDUCE HARM

Performance Measure: By 2028 outreach will have a process in place for greater coordination with police departments and other entities who clear encampments

Lead: Benton County Human Services

Partners: Local police departments, sanitation, Richland Fire, local parks departments, service providers

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Hold meetings with police departments and other agencies who clear encampments to determine areas for coordination	●	●	●																
Work with service providers to determine support that could be offered to encampment residents during clearances				●	●														
Determine and agree to policies that could facilitate improved housing and shelter placements from encampments						●	●												
Begin coordinated encampment clearance efforts								●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

1.6 STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

Building on strategy 1.3, the business community will be included in community education and engagement initiatives. Further, the CoC will hold a listening session with local business owners and managers to understand the impact of homelessness on their businesses and possible avenues for partnership. Partnership may include continuing and expanding regular visits by outreach teams to businesses most impacted by loitering or other negative impacts of homelessness, as well as businesses that may be willing to partner on employment options for individuals experiencing homelessness or other resources. Local business leaders and the Chamber of Commerce will be invited to participate in CoC meetings to further information sharing and partnership.

Table 9: Timeline of Strategy 1.6

1.6 STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Performance Measure: By Fall 2027 the CoC will have held one listening with local businesses

Lead: Continuum of Care

Partners: Service providers, Benton County Human Services

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
CoC organizes questions for local businesses that may be feasible to address through partnership	●																		
Outreach to local businessess for participation in listening session		●																	
Hold listening session with local businesses			●																
Continue to coordinate on outreach or other areas identified in listening session				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

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Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce

Benton and Franklin Counties recognize that front-line homeless service providers are the foundation of an effective response system. Recent efforts have included expanding CoC membership to represent providers across the health and housing service spectrum, as well as establishing the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness to engage the faith community, whose volunteers contribute significantly to outreach efforts.

To further strengthen the homeless service provider workforce, Benton County Human Services will engage in the following actions.

2.1 ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS WITH HIGH SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR SERVICE LEARNING AND MEANINGFUL INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

Some local high schools and colleges have service learning or internship requirements. The CoC will work with service providers to outline realistic internship projects and with local schools to advertise these opportunities for interested students. One model to consider is that of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where work study funds are used to pay interns at participating nonprofits. The goal of this strategy is not to create a new program, but better integrate local homeless service programs into existing internship and service learning opportunities.

Table 10: Timeline of Strategy 2.1

2.1 ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS WITH HIGH SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR SERVICE LEARNING AND MEANINGFUL INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Performance Measure: At least three participating agencies offer an internship or service learning by 2029 | Lead: Continuum of Care | Partners: All partcipating agencies, Benton County Human Services

Action	2026				2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
CoC reviews examples of structured internship programs	■	■																		
CoC agencies internally decide if and where interns may improve capacity and draft position descriptions			■	■	■															
CoC leads outreach to local schools to determine where internships or service learning can be advertised						■	■	■	■											
Agencies launch service learning or internship opportunities										■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

2.2 CONTINUE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT.

The State of Washington currently has a program to certify peer support specialists. Benton and Franklin counties will work to ensure people exiting homelessness are aware of these opportunities, are able to enroll in the training in a timely manner, and are aware of the state training schedule.

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Table 11: Timeline of Strategy 2.2

2.2 CONTINUE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

Performance Measure: Benton and Franklin Counties enroll at least one person in peer support training each time it is offered | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: CoC, service partner agencies

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Benton County creates and publishes on their website calendar of when peer support training is offered and how to enroll	●	●																	
Benton County Human Services creates and distributes a flyer with relevant information that partner agencies can share with interested clients			●	●															
Continue distribution of flyer and facilitating enrollment					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

2.3 WHEN FUNDING IS AVAILABLE, OFFER EMPLOYMENT INCENTIVES OR BONUSES TO THOSE WHO SERVE THE HOMELESS COMMUNITY.

At least annually, Benton County Human Services and CoC providers will periodically review available funding to determine if there is any available stream to offer bonuses to existing employees as a retention incentive or hiring bonuses for hard-to-fill positions.

Table 12: Timeline of Strategy 2.3

2.3 WHEN FUNDING IS AVAILABLE, OFFER EMPLOYMENT INCENTIVES OR BONUSES TO THOSE WHO SERVE THE HOMELESS COMMUNITY

Performance Measure: By 2027 Benton County will review funding sources for potential bonus or incentive funding | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: CoC

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Benton County Human Services and CoC agencies reviews funding for potential avenues for bonuses or incentives	●																		
Monitor funding for future incentives		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

2.4 OFFER CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR HOMELESS SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND PARTNERS.

The CoC aims to be a resource for the community to build its capacity to serve people experiencing homelessness effectively. This will begin with a training needs survey to determine topics that participating agencies and their partners are most interested in. At least twice a year, the CoC will hold a training session, led by current participants, that is open to participating agencies, local faith-based and volunteer agencies, and service partners such as health providers. The CoC currently holds space in meetings for member presentations, and this effort will build upon this success in a peer-facilitated model to share local expertise and experience.

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Table 13: Timeline of Strategy 2.4

2.4 OFFER CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR HOMELESS SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND PARTNERS

Performance Measure: By 2027 the CoC will hold training sessions at least twice annually | Lead: CoC | Partners: Participating agencies

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
CoC conducts a training needs survey	■	■																	
CoC holds training sessions at least twice annually			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

2.5 ACTIVELY INCLUDE LIVED EXPERIENCE AS ACCEPTABLE EXPERIENCE IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS.

Benton County Human Services and CoC participating agencies will review front-line job descriptions to highlight roles that may benefit from including people with lived experience of homelessness. As determined appropriate, job descriptions and postings will be revised to highlight that people with lived experience would be valued applicants. Specific strategies may include those highlighted by the Urban Institute in recent research.

Table 14: Timeline of Strategy 2.5

2.5 ACTIVELY INCLUDE LIVED EXPERIENCE AS ACCEPTABLE EXPERIENCE IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Performance Measure: By 2028 the participating agencies will include lived experience in relevant job positions | Lead: Participating agencies | Partners: Benton County Human Services, CoC

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
CoC reviews samples of lived experience included in positions	■	■																	
Agencies review individual positions where lived experience may be valuable			■	■	■														
Agencies begin internal processes to revise job descriptions and posting						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

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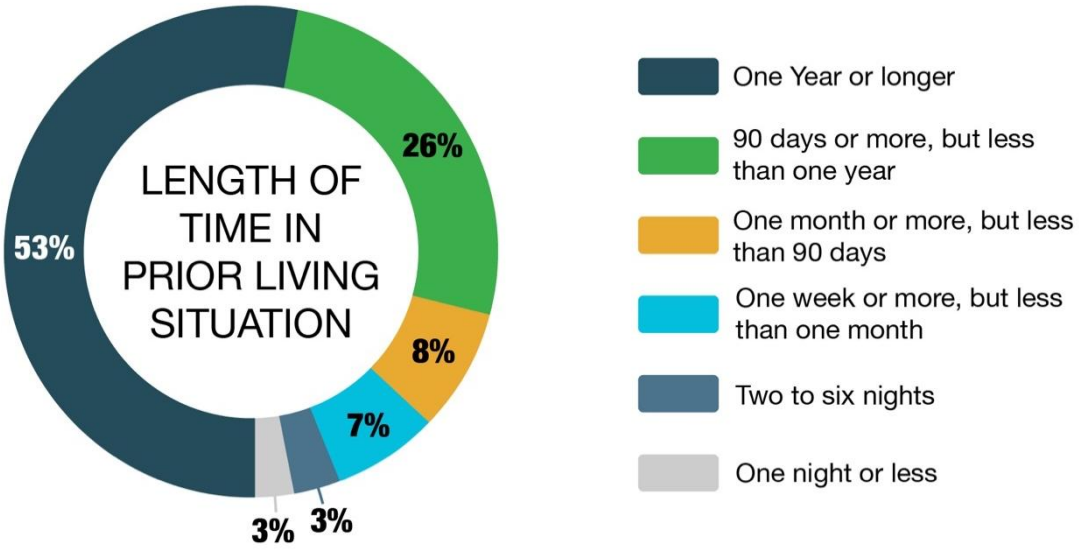
Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible

According to HMIS data, nearly half of people experiencing homelessness were in their previous home for one year or more. This means that many people are in stable living situations, and there is an opportunity to help them remain in their homes. To this end, Benton County Human Services invested nearly $5.5 million in homelessness prevention efforts in 2024. This includes assistance with rental arrears and utilities.

Figure 4: Length of Time in Prior Living Situation



Source: *2024 HMIS Data*

Despite these investments, many households still ultimately lose their housing. The challenge is in part due to increasing rental costs in the area. In Benton County, nearly half of households are considered rent-burdened, meaning they spend over one-third of their income on housing. In Franklin County, over one-third of households are rent-burdened.

Table 15: Rent Burden by County

Percent of Income Spent on Rent	Benton County	Franklin County
30–34.9%	9.1%	5.7%
35% or more	41.2%	35.8%

Source: *American Community Survey 2023, Five-Year Estimates*

To further prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible, Benton County Human Services will take the following actions.

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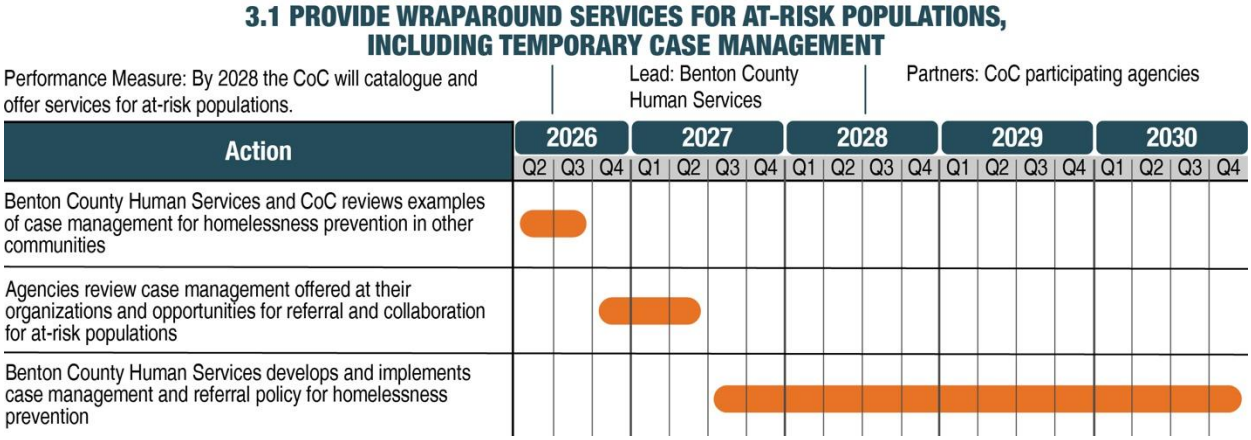
3.1 PROVIDE WRAPAROUND SERVICES FOR AT-RISK POPULATIONS, INCLUDING TEMPORARY CASE MANAGEMENT.

Benton and Franklin Counties have invested heavily in homelessness prevention. Continued efforts will include ensuring households that receive prevention funds receive case management and referrals to other services to ensure they will continue to stabilize and not fall into rental arrears in the future.

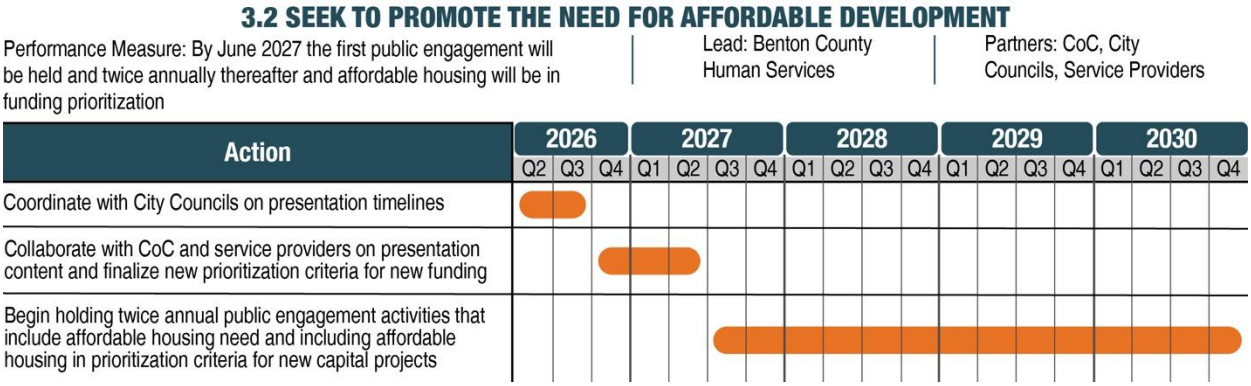
Table 16: Timeline of Strategy 3.1



3.2 SEEK TO PROMOTE THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Section 5 of this plan outlines the prioritization criteria for new capital projects, which seek to maximize deeply affordable housing. Highlighting affordable housing needs will also be included in presentations on homelessness to further encourage cities to maximize affordable housing development (see strategy 1.3). When funding under the jurisdiction of this plan is allocated, affordable housing will be incentivized to the maximum extent possible.

Table 17. Timeline of Strategy 3.2



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3.3 STRENGTHEN LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT AND MEDIATION, INCLUDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LEGAL AID.

Some evictions may be preventable through access to legal assistance or assistance mediating situations with landlords. Mediation can help landlords and tenants resolve disputes without the need to go in front of a judge. These programs are sometimes established through the courts, where an officer of the court contacts both parties within a short time after an eviction is filed. Other programs are established through low-cost legal aid networks or law schools. These programs have been shown to be effective in reducing eviction rates, which may prevent shelter needs. Benton County Human Services and the CoC will review landlord mediation program examples in other communities, seeking to establish realistic practices that may work, including strengthening partnerships with the local Legal Aid group.

Table 18: Timeline of Strategy 3.3

3.3 STRENGTHEN LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT AND MEDIATION, INCLUDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LEGAL AID

Performance Measure: By June 2028 landlord engagement and a partnership with a legal organization will be established

Lead: Benton County Human Services

Partners: Service providers, Legal Aid, Benton County Human Services

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Benton County Human Services and CoC to review landlord engagement examples in other communities	■	■																	
Benton County Human Services to schedule a meeting with Legal Aid	■	■																	
Benton County Human Services, the CoC, and Benton-Franklin Legal Aid establish a partnership to improve landlord engagement and mediation			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

3.4 ESTABLISH DIVERSION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING EFFORTS.

Diversion and problem-solving help people resolve homelessness without significant, ongoing financial assistance, as well as reduce shelter stays. Benton County Human Services will review current funding sources for a flexible source that may fund these efforts. This will include adding diversion efforts to initial intakes and assessments, such as this example from Grand Traverse City, Michigan.

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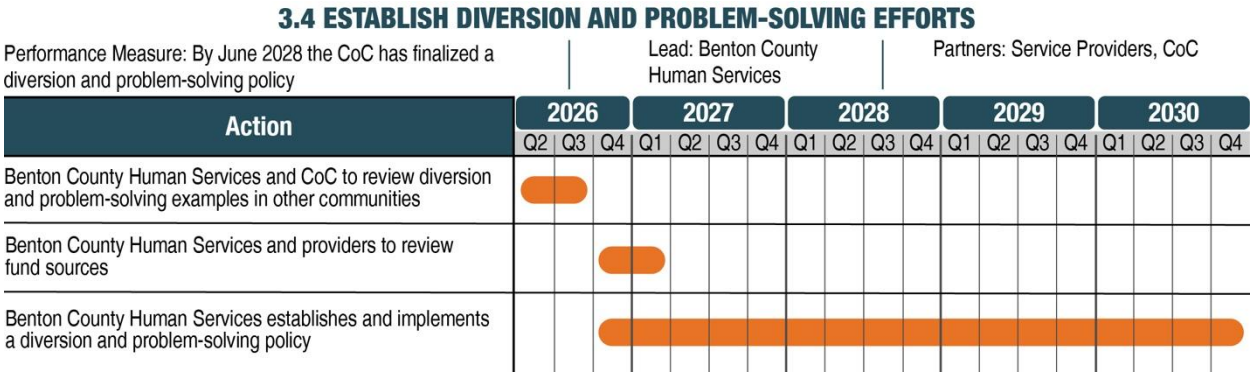
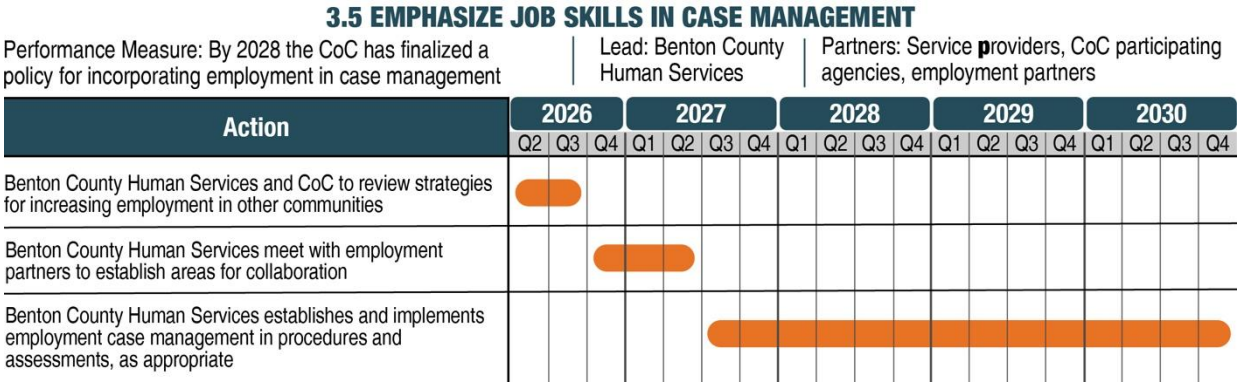
Table 19: Timeline of Strategy 3.4



3.5 EMPHASIZE JOB SKILLS IN CASE MANAGEMENT.

Housing affordability is an issue in Benton and Franklin Counties. While actions need to be taken to increase the amount of affordable housing available in the community (see strategy 3.2 above), it is also important to support households to increase their income so they are able to pay for housing. This includes improving connections to well-paying jobs for people exiting homelessness. The primary cost of employment partnerships is staff time. Staffing for these efforts may be an eligible cost under federal homeless service grants and awards. Additionally, employment agencies, such as the local Workforce and Continuing Education Board, WorkSource Center, Goodwill, or Vocational Rehabilitation Office, may have access to funding to provide staff for these efforts. Benton County Human Services and the CoC will review strategies to increase employment that have been successful in other communities and seek to establish partnerships with existing agencies that may support people experiencing homelessness in their job search.

Table 20: Timeline of Strategy 3.5



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Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm

The CoC is currently making an effort to improve policy and assessment and to implement all core elements to prioritize those who are at greatest risk of harm. Current data shows that nearly half of those served have a disabling condition, which can exacerbate barriers to housing through accessibility, affordability, and access to supportive services. Over ten percent of those served have substance use disorders, which can lead to additional barriers with landlords. Nearly five percent of adults served were survivors of violence. While the Violence Against Women Act provides some additional protections for this group, the experience of domestic violence can impact credit and past rental references, as well as create additional barriers to housing that need to be addressed.

Table 21: Percentage of Adults with Common Barriers to Housing

Barrier	Percentage of Adults
Substance Use Disorder	10.71%
Disabling Condition	41.41%
Survivor of Violence	4.92%

Source: *2024 HMIS Data*

To improve prioritization and address barriers to housing, Benton and Franklin Counties plan to:

4.1 REASSESS COORDINATED ENTRY PRIORITIZATION TOOLS AND POLICIES, INCLUDING FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF COORDINATED ENTRY CORE ELEMENTS.

Benton County Human Services will complete a request for HUD technical assistance to help assess current policies, ensure that all core elements of coordinated entry are being implemented with fidelity, and assist with reassessing the current prioritization tool.

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Table 22: Timeline of Strategy 4.1

4.1 REASSESS COORDINATED ENTRY PRIORITIZATION TOOLS AND POLICIES, INCLUDING FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF COORDINATED ENTRY CORE ELEMENTS

Performance Measure: By 2029 the CoC will have adopted comprehensive policies and an updated assessment tool.

Lead: Benton County Human Services

Partners: Service providers, CoC

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Benton County to review policies, procedures and assessment tool, ensuring alignment with HUD guidance	■	■																	
If necessary, Benton County Human Services will initiate a HUD technical assistance request			■	■	■														
Benton County Human Services revises updated policies and assessment tool with CoC						■	■	■	■	■									
Benton County Human Services implements revised policies and tools											■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

4.2 CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT.

Related to strategies 4.3 through 4.6 below, the CoC will review findings from local needs assessments to better understand specific barriers to accessing services and housing. If determined necessary, the CoC may undertake a new comprehensive needs assessment of people experiencing homelessness

Table 23: Timeline of Strategy 4.2

4.2 CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Performance Measure: By fall 2027 the CoC will have completed a needs assessment

Lead: CoC

Partners: Service providers, Benton County Human Services

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Form needs assessment leadership group	■	■																	
Review current needs assessment and engages in additional feedback and data collection if necessary			■	■	■														
Finalize needs assessment report						■	■												

4.3 STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS DISABILITY NEEDS.

Current HMIS data shows that nearly half of people experiencing homelessness have a disability. Benton County Human Services will review available supportive services for people with disabilities in the county, encouraging participation in the CoC and establishing referral partnerships when possible.

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Table 24: Timeline of Strategy 4.3

4.3 STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS DISABILITY NEEDS

Performance Measure: By fall 2029 the CoC will have at least one additional partner to address disability needs | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: Service providers, disability service organizations, health providers

Action	2026				2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Needs assessment process																				
Review and meet with potential available partners																				
Engage potential new partners in CoC																				

4.4 DEVELOP POLICIES FOR FAMILIES AND OTHER SPECIAL POPULATIONS.

Based on the needs assessment, Benton County Human Services will develop specific policies for populations that face distinct barriers to housing, such as survivors of violence, families, and people with disabilities. These policies will reflect additional prioritization criteria and support services that may be available, such as coordination with McKinney-Vento coordinators within schools.

Table 25: Timeline of Strategy 4.4

4.4 DEVELOP POLICIES FOR FAMILIES AND OTHER SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Performance Measure: By fall 2029 the CoC will have reviewed special population needs and adopted any necessary policies | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: Service providers, CoC

Action	2026				2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Needs assessment process																				
Draft and adopt necessary policies for special populations																				
Implement any new policies																				

4.5 ESTABLISH CASE CONFERENCING AMONG PROVIDERS.

Benton County Human Services and the CoC will review available case conferencing tools and seek to establish regular case conferencing meetings among providers by 2028. The case conferences aim to improve coordination and communication among providers, ensuring all available resources are being offered. Models to consider include those in Texas, West Virginia, and Atlanta, Georgia. The CoC and Benton County Human Services will determine which models and policies, including leadership of the committee, are most appropriate after reviewing examples from other communities. The selected policies will ensure the confidentiality of client information and may be modeled after current task forces within the Benton-Franklin Health District.

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Table 26: Timeline of Strategy 4.5

4.5 ESTABLISH CASE CONFERENCING AMONG PROVIDERS

Performance Measure: By fall 2028 the CoC will implement a regular case conferencing schedule

Lead: CoC

Partners: Service providers, Benton County Human Services

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Needs assessment process	■	■	■	■	■	■	■												
Review examples of case conferencing				■	■	■	■												
Draft and adopt case conferencing policies								■	■										
Engage in a regular case conferencing schedule										■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

4.6 COORDINATE WITH TRANSIT FOR INPUT ON THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.

The CoC will report the results of the needs assessment to Ben Franklin Transit, participating in any available input sessions to ensure the needs of people experiencing homelessness are reflected in transit planning activities. Additionally, the CoC will invite Ben Franklin Transit to attend and participate in CoC meetings.

Table 27: Timeline of Strategy 4.6

4.6 COORDINATE WITH TRANSIT FOR INPUT ON THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Performance Measure: Following the needs assessment at least one homelessness representative will participate in transit planning opportunities

Lead: CoC

Partners: Service providers, Benton County Human Services

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Needs assessment process	■	■	■	■	■	■	■												
Meeting with transit on homelessness-related needs								■	■										
Ongoing collaboration during planning processes										■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

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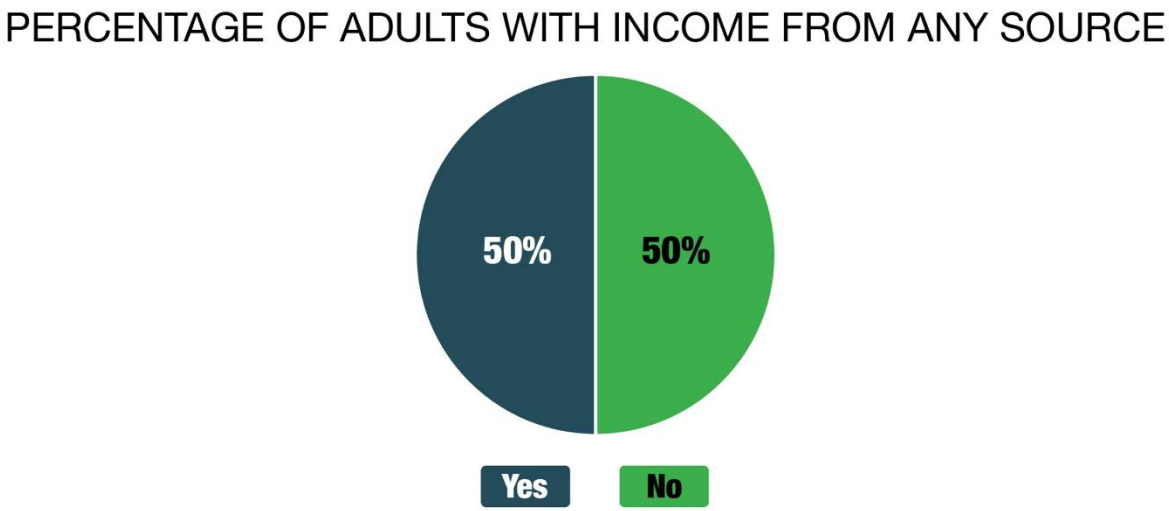
Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs

According to HMIS data, half of those experiencing homelessness have some income. This indicates some potential for living expenses if deeply affordable housing or subsidies were available. There are efforts within Benton and Franklin Counties to create a platform of available affordable rental units; however, supply remains a core challenge. Some cities have recently moved to allow the construction of accessory dwelling units, in line with a statewide mandate. Additionally, a significant portion of the Tri-Cities HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) American Rescue Plan allocation was invested in case management to stabilize housing placements. Despite these investments, feedback from local providers in the development of this plan indicated the lack of affordable housing remains the primary barrier to keeping people housed.

Figure 5: Percentage of Adults with Income from Any Source



Source: *2024 HMIS Data*

To further improve housing placements, Benton and Franklin Counties will take the following actions.

5.1 CREATE A LOW-BARRIER SHELTER.

Low-barrier shelter is a high priority for the county, as there are currently no facilities that do not have significant service requirements for high-acuity people experiencing homelessness. Benton County is currently developing the Columbia Valley Center for Recovery, which will include co-located services and transitional housing (see section 4 for more information). While there are no plans to use this center for low-barrier shelter, ongoing discussions have indicated it could be an option in the future. Whether through the Columbia Valley Center for Recovery or through another service provider that can safely operate a low-barrier shelter in a separate location, this will be a priority for future funding.

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Table 28: Timeline of Strategy 5.1

5.1 CREATE A LOW BARRIER SHELTER

Performance Measure: By 2029 low barrier shelter will be operational | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: Service providers, CoC

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Completion of the Recovery Center, whcih may include low barrier shelter																			
Incorporate low-barrier shelter as a priority item in potential new funding																			

5.2 ENCOURAGE INNOVATIVE MODELS, INCLUDING TINY HOMES, LAND TRUSTS, AND COTTAGE COMMUNITIES.

The Kennewick Housing Authority developed Lilac Homes, a cottage community reserved for people exiting homelessness. These innovative housing models may allow for more units to be developed on existing lots. Benton County Human Services and the CoC will work with cities, housing authorities, and other appropriate agencies to encourage cottage homes, land trusts, and tiny homes that help promote affordable development.

Table 29: Timeline of Strategy 5.2

5.2 ENCOURAGE INNOVATIVE MODELS INCLUDING TINY HOMES, LAND TRUSTS AND COTTAGE COMMUNITIES

Performance Measure: Innovative models will be included in training and public presentations | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: Service providers, CoC

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Prepare for training (2.4) and public events (1.3)																			
Incorporate innovative models into training and public events																			

5.3 COMPILE INFORMATION ON AFFORDABLE VACANT UNITS ONLINE AND PROVIDE HOUSING NAVIGATION SUPPORT.

One barrier service providers face is quickly locating available housing that may be affordable to people exiting homelessness or with limited incomes (e.g., Social Security). One solution is systems like Padmission, a housing navigation software that compiles information about vacant affordable units in real time and is up to date for both service providers and clients to begin a housing search. Benton and Franklin Counties have a current resource, Next Step Help, that has vacancy information for transitional housing. Benton County Human Services and the CoC and will explore how to expand this system to include more housing types, as well as including housing navigation as a training topic for providers to maximize housing placements.

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Table 30: Timeline of Strategy 5.3

5.3 COMPILE INFORMATION ON AFFORDABLE VACANT UNITS ONLINE AND PROVIDE HOUSING NAVIGATION SUPPORT

Performance Measure: By June 2028 the county will have a fully operational online housing search

Lead: CoC

Partners: Service providers, Benton County Human Services

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Review efforts currently in progress and examples from other communities																			
Determine service provider capacity-building needs in making system useable and providing navigation support																			
Revise current efforts or adopt new system to meet needs																			
Implement housing navigation system																			

5.4 PROVIDE STABILITY CASE MANAGEMENT.

According to Washington Department of Commerce data, 12 percent of clients in 2024 returned to homelessness. While this is a decrease from 2023, the community is committed to continuing to ensure homelessness is non-recurring. Benton County Human Services will work with service providers to review case management provided after someone is housed, identifying metrics that make a household more at risk of returning to homelessness and exploring how to provide stability case management to the most at-risk households.

Table 31: Timeline of Strategy 5.4

5.4 PROVIDE STABILITY CASE MANAGEMENT

Performance Measure: By 2028 the CoC will catalogue and enhance stability case management

Lead: Benton County Human Services

Partners: CoC participating agencies

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Benton County Human Services and CoC reviews examples of stability case management for homelessness and current efforts																			
Agencies review case management offered at their organizations and assessments for risk to return to homelessness																			
Benton County Human Services develops and implements stability case management and referral policy																			

5.5 STREAMLINING APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR HOMELESSNESS SERVICES.

The application process for homeless services can be onerous. Many services require coming in person to the Benton County Human Services office, which can result in long lines and pose barriers for people without access to transportation or with other time commitments. Benton County Human Services and the CoC will review current application procedures, identifying areas where processes may be streamlined through leveraging information sharing between providers, online applications, and outreach. This is likely to reduce wait times for housing and services by improving administrative

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processes. When additional documentation from clients is needed, such as identification, Benton County Human Services will coordinate with licensing to find ways to reduce the burden on clients.

Table 32: Timeline of Strategy 5.5

5.5 STREAMLINING APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Performance Measure: By 2029 Human Services will have reviewed and, to the extent possible, streamlined applications | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: CoC, participating agencies

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
CoC and Human Services review application procedures	■	■	■																
CoC and Human Services identify painpoints in current process and explore ways to streamline, including online applications				■	■	■													
CoC and Human Services develop policies and external communications to support new application procedures							■												
Begin new application procedures									■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

5.6 CREATE WRITTEN STANDARDS FOR EVERY PROGRAM.

To ensure services and programs are being administered consistently and effectively, Benton County Human Services and the CoC will work to create written standards for outreach, shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing programs. This will guide how data can be better leveraged and identify opportunities for streamlining services, housing-focused approaches, and program-specific requirements and goals.

Table 33: Timeline of Strategy 5.6

5.6 CREATE WRITTEN STANDARDS FOR EVERY PROGRAM

Performance Measure: By 2030 the CoC will have written governance standards for every program | Lead: Benton County Human Services | Partners: CoC

Action	2026			2027				2028				2029				2030			
	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Benton County Human Services and CoC reviews current written standards and HUD materials for developing written standards	■	■	■																
Benton County Human Services begins adopting and drafting written standards for each program				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

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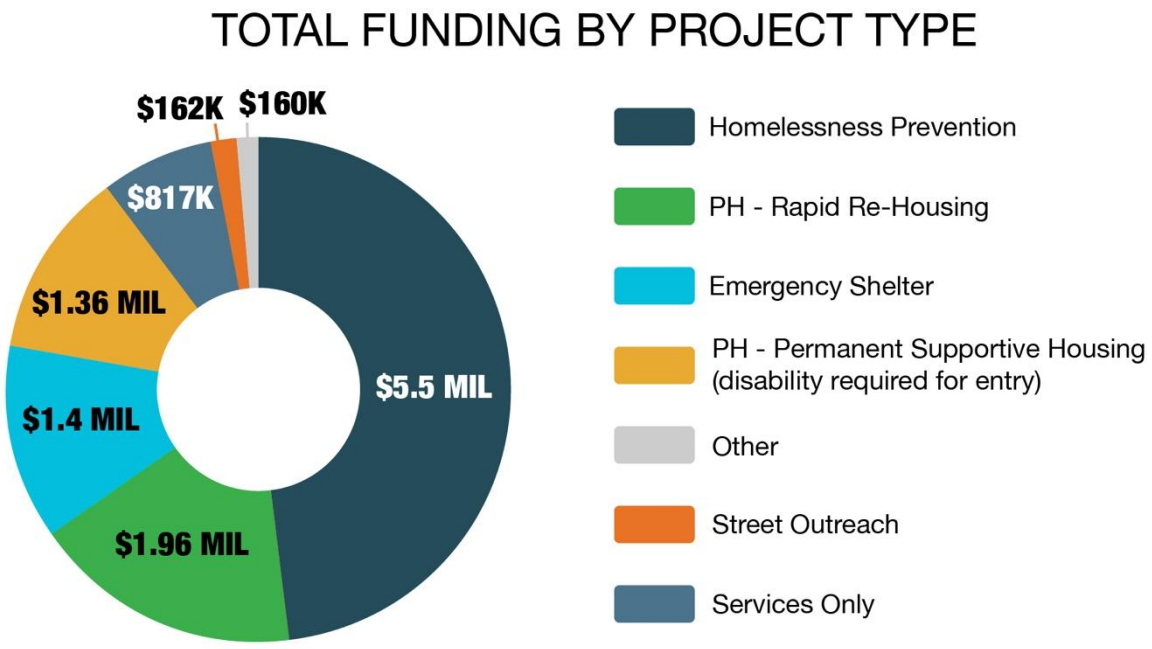
SECTION 2: ESTIMATES OF SERVICE LEVELS

In 2024, Benton and Franklin Counties served over 4,500 people across multiple housing and supportive services. Until June 2026, Benton and Franklin Counties operate under an intra-county agreement under which Benton County Human Services administers funding for Franklin County, though some funding extends to 2027. The available funding includes approximately $2.5 million in local funds, $6.4 million in state funds, and $1.6 million in federal funds. The chart below shows funding by project type based on the SFY 2024 Golden Report. Notably, the region receives a substantial amount of private funding that does not report to HMIS or state agencies, including the operation of the Tri-Cities Union Gospel Mission. Additionally, Benton County Human Services acknowledges data entry errors that have skewed past Golden reports.

Figure 6. Total Funding by Project Type, 2024



Data Source: *SFY24 Golden Report*

Available homelessness funding has increased significantly since 2021. This has enabled the counties to serve a growing number of people, particularly in coordinated entry and homelessness prevention programs. In 2024, there were nearly 9,000 program enrollments, with some people being served in more than one program to offer services as robust as possible.

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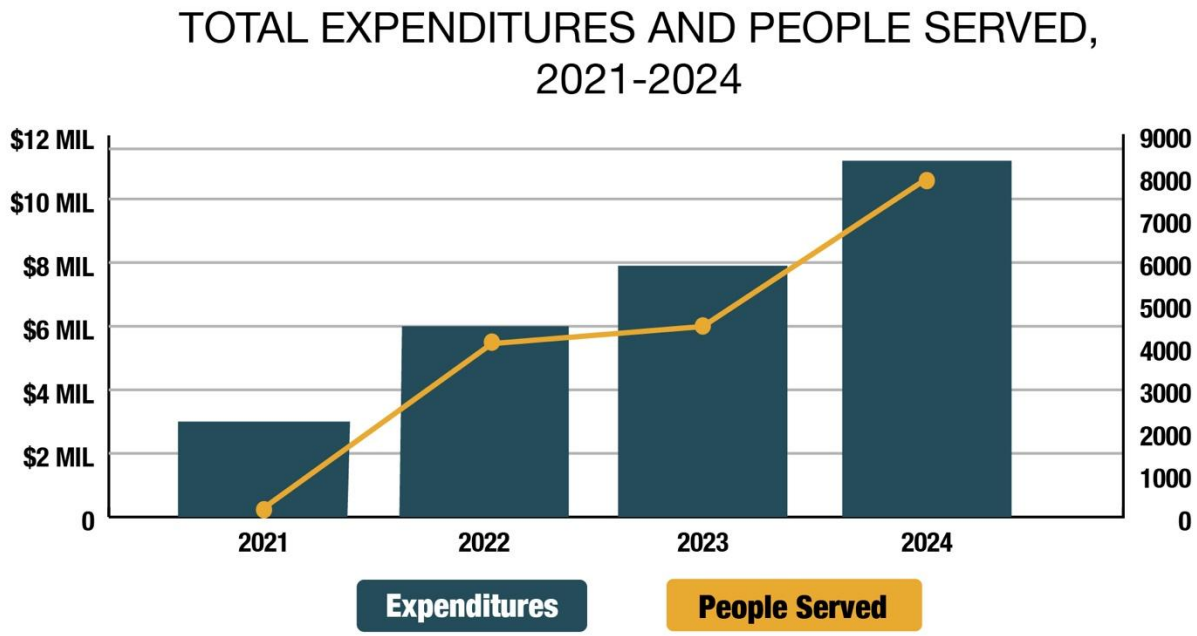
Figure 7. Total Expenditures and People Served, 2021–2024



Data Source: *SFY 21–24 Golden Reports*

The chart below shows expenditures on homeless housing from 2021 to 2024. This does not include special appropriations in 2022 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Transitional housing expenditures have decreased sharply, in part due to changes in HUD policy. Much of this funding is now invested in emergency shelter, which operates primarily as hotel vouchers. Expenditures for permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing have increased modestly but have not kept pace with demand as more households struggle to afford rent and housing costs have increased sharply.

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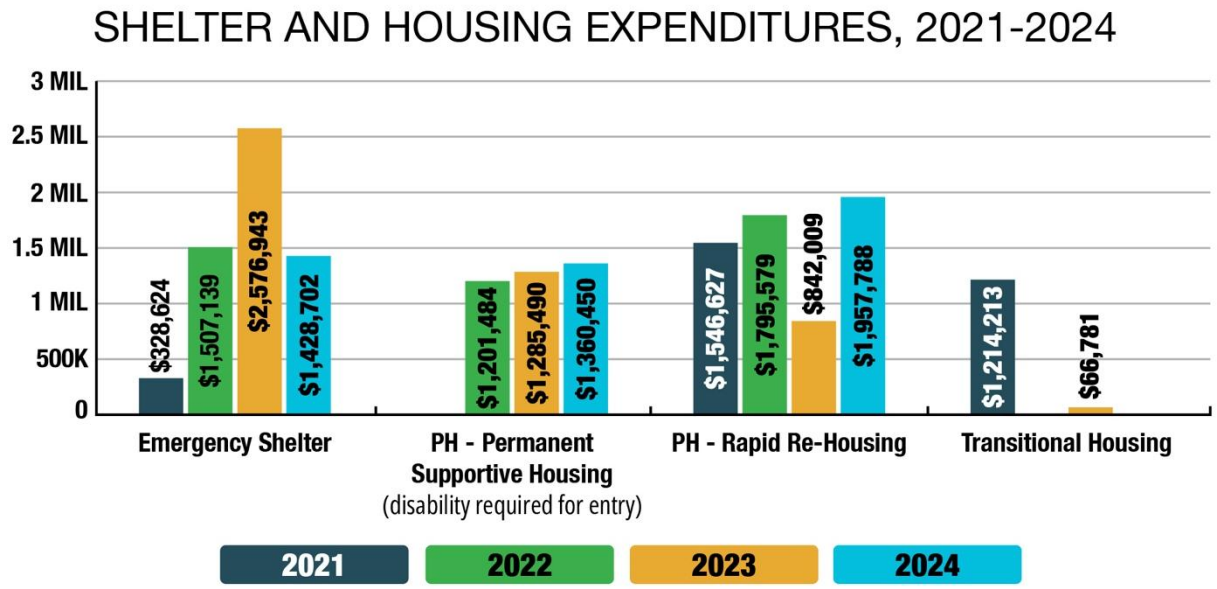
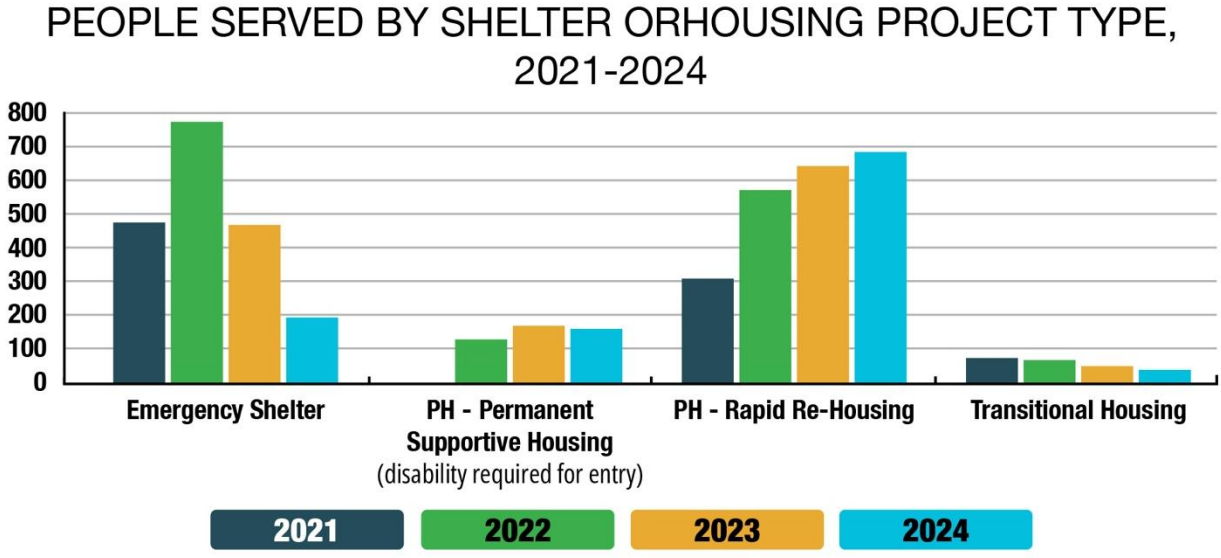
Figure 8. Housing Expenditures, 2021–2024



Data Source: *SFY 21–24 Golden Reports*

As costs have increased, fewer people have been served in emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, and transitional housing. Part of the challenge is longer shelter stays as a result of the deeply constrained supply of affordable housing in the area. Despite this context, Benton and Franklin Counties have increased the number of people served in rapid rehousing programs. However, the stability of these households to be able to maintain rent after subsidies time out remains a concern among providers.

Figure 9. People Served in Homeless Housing, 2021–2024



Data Source: *SFY 21–24 Golden Reports*

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SECTION 3: SURVEY OF FUND SOURCES

Washington State Commerce requires that the Local Homelessness Plan include a table of current funding sources for Housing Assistance Projects and Capital Projects. The purpose of this analysis is to document current funding available for homelessness. The tables below document each funding source, the total amount of funds, funds currently dedicated to homelessness, and a description of how those funds are serving the community.

Table 34: Fund Sources Available to Support the Local Homeless Crisis Response System

Fund Source	Source	Status	Allowable Uses	Amount Received SFY24	Actual/Proje-cted Received SFY25	Current Use
Document Recording Surcharge, Local Portion (Fund 160 & 161)	Local	Receiving/ Collecting	Operations & Capital	$1,025,000	$1,225,000	Domestic violence services, rapid rehousing, mental health, disabled, young adult, jail release, low-barrier, substance use disorder and emergency, VESTRA, capital projects
Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales and Use Tax (Fund 162)	Local	Receiving/ Collecting	Operations & Capital	Amount not provided.	$500,000–600,000	Includes a steering committee. Currently allocated $1,200,000 for phase 2 of the Columbia Valley Center for Recovery and dedicated to 36 beds of recovery housing.

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Fund Source	Source	Status	Allowable Uses	Amount Received SFY24	Actual/Projected Received SFY25	Current Use
Consolidated Homeless Grant, including housing and essential needs	State	Receiving/ Collecting	Operations	$5,046,833	$7,941,151	Homelessness prevention, emergency housing, permanent supportive housing, housing and essential needs
HUD CoC Grant	Federal	Receiving/ Collecting	Operations	$136,000	$136,000	Permanent rental assistance. As Balance of State members, Benton and Franklin Counties are not required to report on total CoC grants.

Table 35: Fund Sources Available to Provide Tenant-Based Housing Vouchers for Low-Income Households

Fund Source	Source	Status	Allowable Uses	Amount Received SFY24	Actual/Projected Received SFY25	Current Use
Community Behavioral Health Rental Assistance	State	Receiving/ Collecting	Operations	$487,122	$487,122	Long-term rental subsidy
Tenant-Based Rental Assistance	State/ Federal	-	Operations	$418,214	$770,904	Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS formula and competitive grants, HOME consortium, Tenant-Based Rental Assistance

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Fund Source	Source	Status	Allowable Uses	Amount Received SFY24	Actual/Proje-cted Received SFY25	Current Use
Housing Choice Voucher	Federal	-	Operations	-	-	Housing Authority receives. Amount requested but not provided.
HUD Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing	Federal	-	Operations	-	-	Housing Authority receives. Amount requested but not provided.

Table 36: Fund Sources Available to Support Community Needs, Including, But Not Limited to, the Local Homeless Crisis Response System

Fund Source	Source	Status	Allowable Uses	Amount Received SFY24	Actual/Proje-cted Received SFY25	Current Use
HUD Community Development Block Grant	Federal	Receiving/ Collecting	Operations & Capital	$68,000 (Benton County) $538,874 (City of Kennewick) $716, 474 (City of Pasco) $425,262.50 (City of Richland)	$68,000 (Benton County) $503,541 (City of Kennewick) $677,540 (City of Pasco) $295,000 (City of Richland)	Housing assistance in non-entitlement areas, public infrastructure improvements, community and recreation improvements, coordinated entry
Mental Health Sales and Use Tax (1/10 of 1%)	Local	Receiving/ Collecting	Operations	Estimated for Benton County $5,500,000 – 6,000,000 Estimated for Franklin County $1,500,000 – 2,000,000 Exact amounts not provided	Estimated for Benton County $5,500,000 – 6,000,000 Estimated for Franklin County $1,500,000 – 2,000,000 Exact amounts not provided	Focus of this funding is the Columbia Valley Center for Recovery, which is a 200,000 sq ft. former hospital that Benton County purchased to enhance behavioral health services

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Table 37: Fund Sources to Support the Homeless Crisis Response System That Benton and Franklin Counties Are Not Collecting or Eligible for

Fund Source	Source	Status	Allowable Uses	Amount Received SFY24	Actual/Proje-cted Received SFY25	Current Use
HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project Grants	Federal	Not receiving/ collecting	Operations	N/A	N/A	As Balance of State members, Benton and Franklin Counties are not required to report on this.
Housing and Related Services Sales and Use Tax	Local	Not receiving/ collecting	Operations & Capital	N/A	N/A	Construction/ac quisition and operations/maint enance/services for affordable housing and behavioral health-related facilities
HUD Emergency Solutions Grant	Federal	Not receiving	Operations	N/A	N/A	Street outreach, emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, homelessness prevention
Local Housing Levies	Local	Not eligible	Operations	N/A	N/A	Affordable housing, affordable homeownership, owner-occupied home repair, and foreclosure prevention

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SECTION 4: ESTIMATES OF PERMANENT AND EMERGENCY HOUSING NEEDS

Benton and Franklin Counties have a strong need for more emergency shelter and permanent housing resources. The table below presents projections of need for homeless housing resources in 2030 and 2045. Projections were based on the Commerce Housing for All Planning Tool. To calculate the need in 2030, the total need was estimated to grow evenly by year. The estimates are based on the Washington Office of Financial Management medium population growth projections included in the Housing for All Planning Tool. Current units included emergency and transitional projects in the 2024 Golden Report.

While the current projections appear as though the Benton-Franklin area is over-resourced for emergency shelter, there is still a strong need in the community. The majority of available shelter beds (195 total) are operated by private entities and have requirements that are not amenable to many people currently experiencing homelessness in the area, such as sobriety, same-sex sheltering rules that may cause couples and teenage children of opposite sexes from their caregivers to separate in order to stay, or church attendance. An additional 65 beds of currently available units are reserved specifically for survivors of domestic violence. Currently, Benton County is developing a Recovery Center, which will create 36 beds of transitional housing with an estimated completion date of spring 2027.

Table 38. Emergency Housing Needs by 2030 and 2045

-	Current Available Units (SFY 2025)	Total Units Needed by 2030	Total Units Needed by 2045	Net New Need by 2030	Net New Need by 2045
Benton County	176	75	302	0	126
Franklin County	266	85	335	0	69
Total for Planning Area	442	160	637	0	195

Data Sources: *Current available units from the 2025 Golden Report, units needed from the Housing for All Planning Tool using medium population projection.*

There is a high level of need for Permanent Supportive Housing in Benton and Franklin Counties. There is a lack of deeply affordable housing, and this is especially true for people experiencing homelessness who may have substance use histories, chronic mental health issues, and other disabilities. This was also noted in the Tri-Cities HOME American Rescue Plan allocation plan, where

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nearly half of the total funding was directed toward supportive services.[3] The goals of this plan aim to address this need through prioritizing low-barrier, deeply affordable housing.

Table 39. Permanent Supporting Housing Needs by 2030 and 4045

-	Current Available Units (SFY 2025)	Total Units Needed by 2030	Total Units Needed by 2045	Net New Need by 2030	Net New Need by 2045
Benton County	115	695	2,774	580	2,659
Franklin County	10	460	1,851	450	1,841
Total for Planning Area	125	1,155	4,625	1,030	4,500

Data Sources: *Current available units from the 2025 Golden Report, units needed from the Housing for All Planning Tool using medium population projections.*

The table below shows income limits by household, followed by the maximum rent that would be considered affordable. The area median income (AMI) for both Benton and Franklin Counties was the same in 2025. Any new housing construction meant to serve people experiencing homelessness would need to be able to be rented or subsidized to these levels. Developing affordable housing, particularly for those in the lowest-income brackets, requires public subsidy as developers cannot typically pay back large loans or afford to properly staff developments at these rent levels.

Table 40. 2025 Affordability by Household Size and Income

-	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons
Extremely Low-Income Limit (30% AMI)	$22,200 $617	$25,400 $706	$28,550 $793	$32,150 $893
Very Low-Income Limit (50% AMI)	$37,000 $1,028	$42,250 $1,174	$47,550 $1,321	$52,800 $1,467
Low-Income Limit (80% AMI)	$59,150 $1,643	$67,600 $1,878	$76,050 $2,113	$84,500 $2,347

Data Source: *HUD User*

[3] https://www.richlandbusiness.com/programs/home-and-home-american-rescue-plan-arp

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The table below shows the hourly wage needed to afford a rental unit at Fair Market Rent (FMR) for the Tri-Cities area. FMR is calculated by HUD and is the estimated cost of the 40th percentile gross rent (rent + utilities) for standard-quality units. The hourly wage below assumes a 40-hour work week and a single income earner. This also assumes the wage-earner is paying one-third of their pre-tax income on rent, which is the maximum amount still considered to be affordable.

Table 41. 2026 FMR and Wages Needed

-	Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Four-Bedroom
FMR	$1,122	$1,268	$1,538	$2,071	$2,385
Hourly Wage Needed	$19.42	$21.95	$26.62	$35.84	$41.28

Data Source: *HUD User*

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SECTION 5: PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA OF HOMELESS HOUSING CAPITAL PROJECTS

Local homeless housing plans must identify guiding principles for housing capital projects, including pre-development, development, and construction. This includes both the process of how funding is awarded and the criteria by which applicants will be scored and selected. All homeless housing capital projects selected for funding must be consistent with local priorities identified in this plan, regulations, and zoning requirements. All capital investments will be selected to meet the future housing needs identified in section 4 above.

Funding Procedure

Local funding for shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and very low-income housing capital projects will be made available by Benton County through a competitive process. Benton County Human Services will announce funding availability and application requirements on the Benton County Human Services website and appropriate listservs. After the deadline, Benton County Human Services staff will review responses for threshold requirements. That is, the applicant submitted all required documentation and proposed a project that meets an eligible use of the funding source.

The Affordable Housing Steering Committee will then review and score applications and may ask applicants to present their project to the Committee. The Committee will then recommend the top applicant or applicants, depending on the amount of funding available, to receive an award. The Benton County Board of County Commissioners has the final decision on approving applicants and the distribution of local funds managed by Benton County. The Franklin County Board of County Commissioners has the final decision on approving applicants and the distribution of local funds managed for Franklin County[4] by Benton County Human Services.

Prioritization Criteria

Benton County will prioritize capital projects that will meet emergency housing needs for people experiencing homelessness and provide permanent housing priority for low-income people at or below 80 percent of AMI when possible, though most funding streams are set at 50% of AMI. The prioritization criteria that Benton County Human Services and the CoC will consider to determine capital investments are detailed below. Benton County recognizes that creative solutions from capable applicants may not meet all criteria listed below and encourages all applicants offering innovative solutions to apply for funding.

[4] Franklin County does not currently have funding for capital projects that would fall under this prioritization criteria.

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Project Readiness: Considerations will include demonstration of funding commitments, status of site control, status of environmental and other required reviews, permitting process, and expected construction and service start dates.

Financing and "Capital Stack": Considerations will prioritize applicants that have diversified funding for the project and are not wholly reliant on one or two funding sources. Priority will also be given to projects where local funds are used as a required match.

Operations, Maintenance, and Security: Considerations will include a demonstrated budget and personnel planning (including contracting) for building security and general maintenance. Benton County understands that projects serving different populations may require different levels of security.

Services and Partnerships: Prioritization will be given to projects that have demonstrated the ability to efficiently and effectively partner with other organizations serving low-income households and people experiencing homelessness. Considerations will include service commitments, funding, and existing partnerships.

Applicant Experience: Consideration will be given to applicants who have a history of successfully completing projects similar to those for which funding is requested. This will not exclude new applicants who have successful experience in other areas, such as providing services.

Populations Served: Priority will be given to applicants able to serve populations for whom there is a demonstrable need, including those earning less than 30 percent of AMI, those in need of low-barrier shelter, and families.

Zoning and Planning: Considerations will include compatibility with current zoning regulations, including zoning for multifamily housing. Further priority will be given to projects that have consulted with relevant planning departments and neighborhood groups on the proposed project to reduce barriers to beginning the project.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS

Community Survey

The following survey was distributed by Benton County Human Services and advisory group members online from October 16, 2025 to November 24, 2025. It was shared through Continuum of Care mailing lists, community forums, and on Benton County social media. There were 59 total responses, though not every respondent answered all questions. The survey text and responses are presented below. Write-in responses are provided verbatim, correcting only spelling errors. Identifying information and profane language were also removed.

SURVEY TEXT AND RESPONSES

Welcome! Benton and Franklin Counties, with the support of The Cloudburst Group, are completing a Local Homelessness Plan as part of the Department of Commerce requirements. To inform this plan, we have assessed needs and gaps across the community and developed ideas for strategies to include in the plan. These strategies were presented to the Advisory Group, and Benton and Franklin Counties would appreciate your feedback on how important each of these strategies is to ending homelessness in our community.

Completing the questionnaire is voluntary and takes approximately 15 minutes. Participation is voluntary, but your answers will help improve partner engagement practices and homeless services provided in the county. Your responses are confidential—your name, email address, and other identifying information are not collected. You may skip any question.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this assessment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Scott Pruitt at scott.pruitt@cloudburstgroup.com.

By clicking the OK button, you are providing your consent to participate voluntarily in this activity.

To begin, please click next.

Below are the goals Benton-Franklin Counties will address in the Homelessness Plan.

- Area 1: Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system.
- Area 2: Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.
- Area 3: Prevent episodes of homelessness wherever possible.
- Area 4: Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.
- Area 5: Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.

Are there any goals you feel are missing from this list? If so, what?

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Verbatim Responses:

- Treat the unhoused like humans- someone's child, parent or sibling.
- Address 'housing' codes that no longer meet today's housing needs.
- Yes, housing for people with disabilities, true accessibility/ADA units, better support.
- Improve the empathy and dignity of existing homelessness prevention infrastructure.
- Decriminalizing homelessness.
- Would addressing local housing policy (affordable housing) fit in with Area 5 or is that out of scope?
- Ensure that we have different types of housing options (PSH etc.).
- Yes, it is vital that we not only include, but prioritize the voices of the unsheltered. population, through participation at every level & each stage of development, for any plan to be meaningful, practical, & most important of all, successful. This practice is especially key in addressing the needs of the homeless population due to the life threatening nature of these needs continuing to go unaddressed, to ensure trauma informed solutions, & the fact that anyone can become homeless. There is a very high level of stigma & discrimination, even hate crimes directed towards this vulnerable population, thus it should be assumed trauma is a major factor. We need to hear what their needs are, from them, due to high level of ignorance, misinformation, criminalization, etc.
- Provide a continuum of care for those affected by addiction.
- Allow pets to stay with their people.
- Decriminalization of homelessness: Ability to sit on sidewalks, more lenient camping laws, etc.
- Addressing increasing, exorbitant, and predatory rents.
- No more new luxury housing until we have enough affordable housing.
- Mobile case workers going to known homeless daytime spots, assisting signing up for services and arranging transportation to appointments.
- Strengthen cross-sector coordination & data sharing (better collaboration among local governments, housing authorities, behavioral health providers, case managers, etc.).
- Coordinate resources and cooperation between counties and cities. Dedicate resources for temporary housing shelters for winter survival from county and city resources. Store those resources on city property when not being utilized so they can be reused as needed.
- Coordinate resources and cooperation between county and city governments.
- Identify the cause of homelessness — mental health, active addiction, something else and provide resources to cure the cause.
- Understand how the communities can close the cost giving and employment with living wages.

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- Provide public accountability of how funding is allocated and spent.
- All of these measures are reactive. How the we facilitate an environment to prevent chronic homelessness.
- Support the Eviction prevention program at Legal Aid. Mediating the problem of eviction before it happens and keeping people in their current home.
- Integrate Health, Behavioral Health, and Social Services in tandem with housing support- Many individuals experiencing homelessness face issues like trauma, substance use, and chronic health conditions and coordinating between housing and health systems is crucial.
- Seek to keep clients housed long-term, vs. temporary housing (motel). How can we help client's long-term, instead of temporary fix.
- Maybe it's outside the scope of the plan, but should there be something about advocating for or seeking funding to increase the availability of affordable housing?
- General comment: It is unclear how these goals will be measured. Perhaps including goals such as: Increasing emergency shelter beds by x% or x beds over the next 5 years. Increasing the availability of transitional or permanent supportive housing units by x over the next 5 years.
- I would our plan very similar to that of the one Walla Walla County just adopted. Linkages between that area and ours are strong. https://agendas.ci.walla-walla.wa.us/docs/2025/ccws/20250922_3759/5765_09.2025_DRAFT_Walla_Walla_County_5_Year_Homeless_Housing_Plan.pdf.
- Three of these goals are inwardly focused on the homeless response system, and only two are directly about getting or keeping people housed. If you're talking to people outside the CoC, I would want you to describe your big outcomes as numbers 3 and 5. Numbers 1, 2, and 4 are means to that end or values that you want to apply in the process. "We will... (3 and 5) in our community." "To do so, we will take concrete actions described in this plan." "In addition, we will build our capacity to serve our community by (1, 2, and 4)". Without that reframing, the goals sound more self-serving than community-serving. Then: are these goals supposed to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, ...)? "Seek" is not hard. "Create 200 new units of transition housing by 12/31/27" gets my attention. I fear it may be too late to impact your plan this year, but seriously, we would love to help you create a better one.

Thinking about how to promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system, which of these strategies would be the most important? Please rank each of the following strategies with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important:

Strategy	Rank	Average Score
Establish a lived experience advisory group	1	2.12
Provide updated, accessible information on services through 211	3	2.91

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Strategy	Rank	Average Score
Strengthen public engagement and education through community listening sessions, homelessness "open houses," or other activities	2	2.62
Explore opportunities to share data across providers	4	3.16
Continue monitoring for racial disparities	5	4.19

Are there any strategies not included here that you feel are important to accomplishing the goal of **promoting an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system**?

Verbatim Responses:

- Don't reinvent the wheel. Follow the blueprint offered by Community Solutions - start by getting people's names and learning their stories.
- Implementation of housing first model, creating shelters run by county to include people in shelter who are denied entry by local shelters, better oversight of crisis response system
- Complete information on a centralized website about the specifics of the different resources available. How many beds are in a particular shelter (as well as whether/how many of those beds are restricted male/female), the amenities that are available there (such as shelters or career assistance), the behavioral requirements they impose (must attend their church services, must pass a sobriety test, etc.), and what limitations they place on the people that stay there (a maximum stay length, whether pets or service animals are allowed, whether they're allowed to stay during the day).
- Establish a dormitory-style shelter to house those who have intractable conditions that prevent regaining self-sufficiency.
- Get better collaboration from existing shelters to implement low barrier policies (The Mission) or help the public understand the Mission doesn't meet our communities need for shelter.
- We need more housing options.
- We desperately need a low barrier shelter option, and better coordination of services so there is a centralized resource. We need our counites to step up and provide leadership, guidance, and funding on this issue. Nonprofits, philanthropy, grants, and donors can help. We should follow the success of the CV Center for Recovery in launching a true community wide effort to provide shelter, resources, and case management.
- Participatory research & development is critical (explained in #1), at every level. There's all kinds of ways to do this. Would be nice to provide financial incentives to increase said participation & motivate. Many are afraid, hopeless, etc. I'd be willing to help as a volunteer in outreach, or whatever else.
- Strengthen partnerships and awareness among related agencies and organizations.

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- Stop Policies That Actively Create Harm!! Sweeps and police harassment cause homelessness to last longer and become more dangerous. Cities serious about their goals should commit to: Ending camp sweeps unless immediate safety hazards exist, ending anti-homeless ordinances that criminalize survival (sitting, sleeping, loitering, panhandling) and ending police enforcement as primary response (social workers and crisis teams instead).
- A publicly funded short-term shelter system.
- Soliciting feedback from people actively experiencing homelessness.
- I think having 1 spot on a website or Facebook that had real time updates on local housing resources availability.
- Share metrics such as housing placement rates, average time experiencing homelessness, how many people assisted that week, etc. - help the community understand the progress being made by Dept. of Human Services and what efforts people are doing to get out of homelessness.
- Coordinate a homeless response team who can go out and fill out paperwork with those experiencing homelessness on the streets. Screening them immediately and then making appointments for them to come into HRC for further help. Establish a community resource center that has showers similar to a public pool. It could be operated by a local organization.
- Create a low risk community shelter. Create a public showering Facility.
- Take DEI out of the equation! None of the above priorities are important.
- Yes a City Council quarterly or Bi-annually homeless update.
- More direction from Dept. of Commerce.
- Strengthen and increase drug treatment options, as research shows that the majority of homeless experience that difficulty.
- The financial side.
- Make sure there are people on the team that are working the problem currently, the folks in the trenches daily. They will have the best knowledge on what will work and will not.
- Ensure decision making reflects the realities of those most affected. Track and publicly report on resolution outcomes.
- A focus on rehabilitation, for those unhoused who are experiencing addiction.
- How do/are people experiencing homelessness current accessing services? What doors are they coming in from? Are they learning about and accessing information on services from 211 or is it through service provider outreach? This will help identify either a.) what barriers might there be to knowing about or accessing information from 211; b) whether there may be better ways of focusing resources to how this population is learning about and accessing resources in the community.

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- - Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm. - Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.
- More accessible resources and less judgmental criticism.

What work is currently being done to **promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system?**

Verbatim Responses:

- Ha ha ha - so far it's piece meal and cruel. Too many elected officials and community "leaders" think it should be someone else's problem. People saying "we have a shelter" when it breaks up families, and prohibits pets shows ignorance or callousness. Also, the hours at the Mission prevent people from holding most service jobs - can't sling burgers til midnight. The annual count, early morning when it's cold doesn't get an accurate count- anyone capable will find shelter. We need a midday count that includes libraries, buses, and parks among other locations. Motel 6 and other hotels should be looked at too. That is not housing.
- Voucher.
- Essentially a lot of talk and no action.
- Work through various CoC workgroups, All Saints Church efforts.
- Various programs and nonprofits are working in this area. Union Gospel Mission, various resource navigators, church ministries, and more.
- I honestly have heard nothing good about unhoused people trying to get help.
- Very little. Micro non-profit and food/survival goods distribution groups (and one single constantly at-capacity homeless shelter) are all the Tri-Cities boasts, which is abysmal. Add to that that the community at large sees homelessness as an optics problem that affects our tourism! If Benton Franklin truly wants to help the homeless at an administrative level, I challenge you to put your money where your mouth is or shut your yap.
- City governments are failing to be transparent about evictions from public areas.
- The Health Dept. is putting together their Community Health Improvement Plan.
- There is a team that goes out but I believe it goes out on a weekly basis but doesn't fill out paperwork just gives information. It should also have a liaison from the community added to it.
- Union Gospel Mission.
- The Benton-Franklin CoC is active and useful in learning what services are available in the community. However, it would be useful to have more insight into how folks are prioritized for assistance.
- Development of NextStepHelp.org to track available beds in the Tri-Cities on a daily/weekly basis.

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- Services through CE look at monitoring prioritization taking into account the percentage of racial minority groups represented in poverty, trying to assure there is fair representation in housing programs.
- There's to much to list. Tri-Cities is attacking this from many angles.
- In house training.
- Prioritization.
- The C of C team within the counties.
- We need to understand that we cannot keep providing people with their rent money, that we need to educate them at the root of the problem. Money management, mediation with their landlords when issues arise, maybe a one time help with deposits. We also need to work with landlords and help them understand that there are great renters out there that just cannot afford the high rent they are asking even working full time. Education for landlords is essential.
- Immediate housing needs. Providing support through local agencies to walk through process. Sending referrals for clients to be waitlisted and when selected, equal opportunity to utilize housing services. Community outreach weekly.
- Not sure. But I do know that helpful information is hard for the homeless to access.
- I feel like there is some work being done, however there's a lot of miscommunication among community partners or sometimes no transparency.
- CoC Committee meets on a monthly basis to discuss issues within the system, working to get more providers in HMIS. Many committees meet on a monthly/quarterly basis to "staff" cases.

Thinking about how to strengthen the homeless service provider workforce, which of these strategies would be the most important? Please rank each of the following strategies with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important:

Strategy	Rank	Average Score
Establish partnerships with high schools and the community college for service learning and meaningful internship opportunities	4	2.60
Continue peer support engagement	2	2.51
When funding is available, offer employment incentives or bonuses to those who serve the homeless community	3	2.58
Offer continuing education and training for homeless service employees	1	2.30

Are there any strategies not included here that you feel are important to accomplishing the goal to **strengthen the homeless service provider workforce?**

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Verbatim Responses:

- The fact that non-profit employees who support unhoused people barely make a living wage is shameful. At a United Way event on housing a few years ago, a young woman working at a service org was teary eyed saying she's barely getting by herself, local rents are so high. Engage the nursing students from CBC/WSU in street health programming (WSU Spokane has a model).
- Legal help when faced with County and State codes and timelines that force people off their own property.
- Diverse hiring, incentivizing those with lived experience to enter the workforce.
- Allowing homeless people to serve other homeless people in exchange for pay or non-monetary help.
- Recognize that some homeless people are so ill they will need perpetual care, and establish a shelter for such.
- I don't think there would be a shortage if we had funding? Partner w/ BSW & MSW programs.
- Financial incentive in building strong & meaningful consumer/peer (homeless/formerly) participation & community inclusion. This could provide incentive leading towards a pathway to recovery from the trauma of experiencing homelessness! It certainly has in many locations.
- Provide medical and mental health benefits for service providers.
- Yes, partnership with grassroots and mutual aid organizations should be a key strategy. These groups have deep, trusted relationships and provide essential supplies and care. Reducing barriers to their work (space access, permitting, coordination support) will strengthen the overall care network. In addition, reducing enforcement-based responses (like sweeps) would prevent burnout and turnover among front-line workers.
- Actively recruiting more personnel.
- Competitive compensation and benefits. Cross training. Career pathways. Recognition/appreciation for staff.
- Establish communication channels with local citizens (who may not be 5013c) working with the homeless, and city councils and governments to build a relationship for the benefit of all involved.
- Provide transparency and accountability of funding.
- Ensuring adequate funding so providers can have manageable caseloads. This is not only for the benefit of the provider, but also the participant.
- Education on the homelessness crisis in our communities to the general population.

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- People will do this work if their heart is in it. I do not think money should be given to them to do it. That money should go into the program. I think educating the local high schools and colleges is a great idea. Offering jobs to people currently not able to pay their rent due to not working. That should be a great place to invite applicants.
- Make it more clear to the community who the "homeless service providers" are.
- Better pay for homeless service providers.
- Require all funded providers to participate in system wide coordination efforts. Offer ongoing training on cultural humility, trauma-informed care, and anti-racist practice for all staff and partners.
- Provide education to partnering organizations.
- Clear resource mapping among homeless service providers so that appropriate referrals for services can be made when meeting one-on-one with individuals/families experiencing homelessness.

What work is currently being done to **strengthen the homeless service provider workforce?**

Verbatim Responses:

- Grassroots groups, community volunteers, and harm-reduction teams are working every week to provide supplies, care, and supportive relationships to unhoused neighbors. This work is essential to reduce hospitalizations, trauma, and death. More collaboration and city support for these efforts would dramatically expand capacity.
- Not enough is being communicated about this subject.
- My understanding is that WA State Commerce may provide ongoing education, and there is an opportunity for peer support through the local CoC, but I am not aware of any other work or local activities.
- Recent establishment of the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness. We hope to expand and collaborate our efforts to know and serve our local unhoused community members.
- Increased efforts to grow the local CoC.
- Foundational Community Support funds have been critical in our ability to offer help to the unhoused.
- Peer support works well. Incentives to hire good employees.
- Many agencies are in place to assist with finding employment such as Goodwill OTC, Sagebrush etc. HOME-ARP Supportive Services offers funding for employment assistance.

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Thinking about how to prevent episodes of homelessness wherever possible, which of these strategies would be the most important? Please rank each of the following strategies with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important:

Strategy	Rank	Average Score
Strengthen landlord engagement and mediation, including partnerships with Legal Aid	3	3.16
Incentivize affordable development	2	3.10
Provide wraparound services for at-risk populations	1	2.53
Engage at-risk households with temporary case management	4	3.37
Establish diversion and problem-solving efforts	5	4.78
Coordinate on encampment clearances to identify appropriate shelter or housing	6	5.00
Strengthen partnerships to reunify people with their city of origin	7	6.06

Are there any strategies not included here that you feel are important to accomplishing the goal to **prevent episodes of homelessness wherever possible**?

Verbatim Responses:

- The cities shouldn't issue permits for any additional hotel conversions unless the at least 30% of units are rented below market rate. REQUIRE permanently affordable housing in new medium density tracts, as well as townhome/condos. Cities shouldn't issue permits support Habitat & Tres Ríos Community Land Trust for low and moderate income earners to provide security in case of job loss or medical emergency. Look at Pitkin County CO for an example.
- When people below a certain income level file their taxes, include information about applying for cash assistance or SNAP benefits automatically with their tax returns.
- Create a temporary shelter where competencies can be evaluated. If persons are found to be chronically ill, have a permanent shelter where they can live peacefully. If persons are found to have needs that are not chronic, work with them to become self- sufficient and then leave the temporary shelter.
- Clarify differences between wraparound services and case management. Wrap around often requires some sort of case management.
- Financial assistance.
- Provide affordable housing for everyone. Reduce barriers in accessing subsidized housing. Hire civil rights attorneys. Work with the WA state attorney General. Just some ideas. Stop all cruelty.
- Strengthen addiction recovery programs.

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- The most important prevention strategies are those that stop criminalization and displacement. Encampment sweeps, anti-loitering enforcement, and confiscation of survival property consistently lead to new or prolonged homelessness. The plan should explicitly ban enforcement-led responses and instead support harm reduction, survival services, and trauma-informed outreach. Additionally, the county should partner with and support mutual aid groups who offer food, supplies, and crisis assistance without barriers. These groups prevent homelessness by stabilizing people before they reach crisis, especially individuals who are undocumented or fearful of interacting with systems.
- Assisting unhoused, and at-risk people in obtaining employment, including providing public transportation passes, etc.
- Institute a substantial tax on developers who build luxury or high cost apartments, prioritize/incentivize central planning and affordable housing for individuals and families.
- Use school or social service data to identify households at risk.
- Pass city and county laws prohibiting encampments and vagrancy.
- Find and help establish warming and cooling locations in each of the Tri-Cities that can temporarily house the unhoused during these more dangerous times.
- Having beds that fit the need of the individual whether it's SUD or MH or simply needing a save short term stay. Placing people in the wrong environment makes them feel as if there's no help for them.
- Job training strategies.
- Education all around to everyone, landlords, tenants, community leaders, and management companies.
- Strengthen income stability.
- Emphasizing a need for health care intervention when needed. Addiction issues, criminal issues also lead to homelessness. When released from jail on whatever charge, seems to start the whole process over till personal is back in jail. In jail he is safe and secure and fed three times a day. Freedom from jail is actually worse for so many.
- It is not clear how these goals will be measured. Encouraging additional housing development is important as an increase in overall housing stock does impact affordability. Identifying local funding streams to invest in affordable housing through non-profits housing providers and housing authorities (sources which leverage significant state, federal and private investment) should also be included as a goal. Measuring progress could be passing a 0.1% sales tax for affordable housing or creating dedicated funding streams through community foundations that invest in affordable housing developments may be measurable goals to consider.
- Advocate for legislative changes around incentives for affordable housing development. Legislative changes around short-term rentals that affect local vacancy rates.

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What work is currently being done to **prevent episodes of homelessness wherever possible?**

Verbatim Responses:

- Community partners and volunteer-based organizations provide survival support, crisis response, and trusted relationships that keep people safe and housed. These efforts reduce the likelihood of emergency institutional involvement, eviction, and prolonged crisis. More support and collaboration with these local groups would strengthen prevention outcomes.
- Rental/utility assistance. Hotel vouchers.
- Pass city and county laws prohibiting encampments and vagrancy.
- My understanding is that at-risk households that receive rental assistance receive case management and housing stability planning.
- Work being done at All Saints could serve as a model for establishing other warming and cooling locations. I think there is also one in a Pasco church.
- Human Services has EP funding to assist with at risk households. FCS services provide case management to assist households with stability or when homeless help finding permanent housing.
- Additional transitional housing is being formed.
- Outreach.
- Currently legal aid has a program to try and ensure an eviction. Get the client and the landlord talking before it gets to the eviction in court process. Education to clients on money management and to landlords on how to prevent lack of communication.
- Union Gospel Mission is a blessing for many. Catholic Charities apts in Pasco is another blessing. More spaces needed like these. More spaces for women with children.
- Many agencies provide wraparound services to those experiencing homelessness. A non-profit is currently being created to develop a low-barrier shelter. Comprehensive plans are being reviewed to include incentivizing affordable development. HOME-ARP Supportive services includes funding for case management.

Thinking about how to prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm, which of these strategies would be the most important? Please rank each of the following strategies with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important:

Strategy	Rank	Average Score
Reassess coordinated entry prioritization tools and policies	1	2.85
Fully implement coordinated entry core elements	2	3.00
Strengthen partnerships to address disability needs	3	3.10

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Coordination with transit for input on the needs of people experiencing homelessness	6	4.17
Establish case conferencing among providers	5	4.02
Develop policies for families and other special populations	4	3.85

Are there any strategies not included here that you feel are important to accomplishing the goal to **prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm?**

Verbatim Responses:

- Every successful program I've read about has wraparound- housing first- programming. Providers should be in regular contact with each other.
- Work with local campgrounds to allow homeless campers to stay in vacant spots for a discounted price, rather than simply kicking them out of existing encampments.
- Use VAT.
- Yes! Has the consumer voice (the homeless population) been included at each step? This is most important. Without it you risk wasting time & money.
- One of the greatest risks of harm comes from enforcement-driven responses to homelessness. Encampment sweeps, police harassment, and confiscation of survival property create trauma, worsen health conditions, and directly increase housing instability. Preventing harm must include eliminating punitive practices and replacing them with harm reduction and consistent outreach.
- Giving families avenues to ask for help without adverse consequences.
- Substance use support. Behavioral health support.
- Low wages, loss of financial resources and cost of rentals are the biggest contributors to loss of housing.
- Question 11 appears to be a bunch of gibberish. Stop importing and resettling "asylum seekers" which are a drain on our community. Taxpayers have had enough of DEI and open borders.
- Affordability and availability seem to be so essential to lowering homelessness. We need more incentives for developers to create more low-income housing rather than so many high-end units.
- I think more clearly defining the spectrum of need across the homeless population and then identifying resource and service allocation and interventions that are appropriate to that segment of the homeless population.

What work is currently being done to **prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm?**

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Verbatim Responses:

- Local volunteer groups and outreach providers are already prioritizing those most at risk by bringing essential supplies, crisis support, and consistent relationships to people where they are. This work reduces immediate harms and improves trust, which increases the likelihood that people will seek and accept stabilizing services when they are available.
- I believe people who are currently homeless get prioritized first for assistance.
- My understanding is that households are prioritized for services based on greatest needs. It would be great to have more insight into how households are prioritized through coordinate entry and if the core elements have been fully implemented.
- During Mission Possible at Lord of Life last summer we were pleased to learn that many agencies allow their trained staff to offer case management to community members who are not their clients. Do we know which agencies do that and can they be helped to collaborate?
- CE uses a prioritization tool assigning a point total for different factors. The households with the highest score receive assistance first.
- Good coordinated entry.
- Coordination with Transit occurs as they provide monthly scholarships to agencies for bus tickets, some case conferencing is occurring with different agencies through different platforms.

Thinking about how to seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs, which of these strategies would be the most important? Please rank each of the following strategies with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important:

Strategy	Rank	Average Score
Compile information on affordable vacant units online	3	3.44
Implement innovative models including tiny homes, land trusts, and cottage communities	2	2.77
Create a low barrier shelter	1	2.42
Provide stability case management	4	3.67
Explore opportunities to expedite and support lease processes through verifications and documentation support	6	4.84
Provide housing navigation support	5	3.86

Are there any strategies not included here that you feel are important to accomplishing the goal to **seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs**?

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Verbatim Responses:

- Better education for elected, business "leaders" and community members. Too many people make assumptions and honestly don't want to help. I often wonder how much money is spent harassing our unhoused community (In Richland) and the value of items that are trashed during sweeps (things like tents and sleeping bags that were donated by caring community members) not to mention the wasted landfill space Hit up all our big box churches with their huge lawns and parking lots and see if they'd like to actually do Christs work.
- Seems like providing a tool for vacant units online would be a part of housing navigation support, not a separate item.
- Create a low barrier shelter!
- Yes, ask the population you seek to serve.
- People must be housed in places that are trauma-informed and low-barrier, with accommodations for disability, pets, partners, and cultural needs.
- Stop incentivizing the raising of rents. Schemes to turn hotels into housing have not resulted in affordable housing units.
- In reference to available units or programs - Postings on social media and the news should be pushed out as that is the quickest way to get info out to the public now days.
- Provide at risk individuals with mentors who may accompany them as they try to navigate the system.
- Don't even think of putting a "low barrier shelter" or tiny homes in my neighborhood. Why ruin property values with that?
- Bishop Skylstad seems to incorporate low barrier with supportive services located in the building so that their tenants can receive services without having to need transportation in order to make it to their appointments (resources: medical, jobs options, computers, community resources, case management, etc.).
- Preventing homelessness, addressing systemic barriers, and supporting people after they're housed.

What work is currently being done to **seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs?**

Verbatim Responses:

- Some non-profits are providing assistance to search for housing. Cities have implemented ADU's in their zoning laws. Rental assistance. Utility assistance. BF Legal Aid works with clients who are at risk of eviction.
- Nothing, I hope. Get a job, save money and buy a mobile home or Condo.

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- Housing navigation support and stability case management.
- Continuum of Care brings together those involved. More financial support and collaboration is needed.
- There are efforts to create a list of available units. FCS provides stability case management.
- Partnerships with FCS agencies to help case manage homeless clients seeking rapid rehousing services.
- Not enough availability. Process often extremely daunting. Client may have to go through 3 different agencies, make appt, have needed documentation etc. just to discover there is no availability. Hard to navigate with no transportation and no advocate in their corner.
- A website has been developed to track vacancies for transitional housing NextStep.org. A non-profit is being developed for a low-barrier shelter.

How important are the following to accomplishing the overall goals of this plan?

Engaging police departments for coordinated outreach and response

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	4	10.26%
Somewhat unimportant	2	5.13%
Somewhat important	10	25.64%
Very important	23	58.97%

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Streamlining application procedures for homelessness services

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	3	7.69%
Somewhat unimportant	1	2.56%
Somewhat important	4	10.26%
Very important	31	79.49%

Strengthening partnerships with business community

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	2	5.13%
Somewhat unimportant	4	10.26%
Somewhat important	13	33.33%
Very important	20	51.28%

Which group do you represent?

Response	Count	Percentage
Housing provider	5	11.90%
Behavioral health provider (including substance use services)	2	4.76%
Shelter services	5	4.76%
Tribal government	0	-
School or educational institution	2	4.76%
Domestic violence service provider	0	-
First responder	0	-
Community member	19	45.24%
Other	12	28.57%

Other:

Verbatim Responses:

- Governmental system partner.
- Healthcare.
- Grant funder/philanthropy.
- Formerly homeless/peer.
- Local government.
- Attorney/ public defense.

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- Faith community--need to collaborate.
- Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking and Crime Victim Provider.

If you work for an agency, how do you identify your role as it relates to the Benton and Franklin counties homeless service system? (Check all that apply)

Response	Count
Outreach Worker	3
Navigator	2
Case Manager	1
Oversight and Policy	3
Other	8

Other :

Verbatim Responses:

- Benton County Employee- Human Services.
- Grant funder.
- Regularly works with community members to make sure folks living on the streets of Richland are warm and fed.
- Occasionally give resources.
- Building school leader.
- Shelter provider and mentor.
- Program Specialist.
- Affordable housing provider.

If new funding became available, which of the following would be your top priority for investment?

Response	Count	Percentage
Shelter facilities that serve high acuity populations	13	33.33%
Programs and shelter to serve families	10	25.64%
Programs that provide ongoing subsidized rent or permanently affordable units	9	23.08%
Expansion of the Recovery Center	4	10.26%
Other	3	7.69%

Other:

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Verbatim Responses:

- All of these are important due to the many needs in the community.
- Law Enforcement.
- Stop milking the taxpayer.

Do you have any other feedback about the goals and strategies of the Local Homelessness Plan?

Verbatim Responses:

- It would be lovely if the cities and counties could develop a truly coordinated and collaborative program that can keep people as close to their chosen locale as possible. Just getting food is difficult the way things are now- inconvenient hours at food banks, some not convenient to bus route, etc.
- I can concerned about putting too much emphasis on the Recovery Center to be able to "solve" all these problems.
- Thank you for all your work & to all those who advocate & work with thus population from a place of love, acceptance (vs. judgement), & compassion.
- Please put your money where your mouth is. I know you mean well, but after seeing the criminalization of homelessness here in the Tri-Cities, my hopes for your good actions are low indeed.
- Programs that provide ongoing subsidized rent or permanently affordable units is the next top priority for investment.
- We need community workers and social workers working with homeless folks. Not cops.
- I believe there needs to be cooperation between all the cities and counties. The issues that we face impact all three cities and outlying areas. The counties need to step up and put resources out for to help the cities provide resources to our communities. There is never a county commissioner attending the meetings of the COC and they should have someone there, so they can provide input along with dialog with the other COC attendees. I would like to see some current or former homeless(houseless) individuals also participate in providing a perspective.
- Put the homeless on a bus and send them somewhere else.
- It would be great to have a process that allows for the tracking of progress towards identified goals.
- I love the fact that Kadlec has a mobile medical van at St Vincent's on Wed when their food bank is open and also that they have a case manager ride with a police officer one day a week.
- It would help to speak to some of our community who are currently seeking shelter or who have barriers to fitting into the systems in place. They can be a wealth of information about how our current systems are working or where they are failing.

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- There needs to be communication with the agency that holds the funding and what is being done with that funding. Also why are agencies going out to do Outreach in the community when they have client sitting in line for 3-4 hours to get some sort of assistance.
- Needs to be comprehensive like the one done in Walla Walla County.

How do you identify your race and ethnicity? Please select all that apply.

Response	Count	Percentage
Asian/Asian American	0	0%
Black/African American	2	5.26%
Hispanic/Latino/a/x	8	21.05%
Native/Indigenous American	0	0%
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0	0%
White	27	71.05%
Other	1	2.63%

How do you identify your gender?

Response	Count	Percentage
Man	8	20.51%
Woman	28	71.79%
Non-binary	2	5.13%
Other	1	2.56%

What is the primary city you represent?

Response	Count	Percentage
Kennewick	11	27.50%
Pasco	9	22.50%
Richland	13	32.50%
Other	7	17.50%

Other:

Verbatim Responses:

- West Richland.
- Benton City.
- Benton County.
- Benton County.

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- Benton and Franklin Counties.
- Benton County.

Are you involved with the Continuum of Care?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	19	46.34%
No	22	53.66

QUESTIONS FOR COC-INVOLVED RESPONDENTS ONLY:

How important are the following to strengthen the capacity of the Continuum of Care?

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%
Somewhat unimportant	0	0%
Somewhat important	3	17.65%
Very important	14	82.35%

Engagement and participation of people with lived experience in the Continuum

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%
Somewhat unimportant	2	11.76%
Somewhat important	3	17.65%
Very important	12	70.59%

Improving coordinated entry policy and implementation

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%
Somewhat unimportant	1	5.88%
Somewhat important	6	35.29%
Very important	10	58.82%

Training for Continuum of Care board members and Human Services staff

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%

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Somewhat unimportant	3	17.65%
Somewhat important	8	47.06%
Very important	6	35.29%

Creating written standards for every program

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%
Somewhat unimportant	3	18.75%
Somewhat important	8	50.00%
Very important	5	31.25%

Strengthening Continuum of Care governance

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%
Somewhat unimportant	2	11.76%
Somewhat important	7	41.18%
Very important	8	47.06%

Engaging in technical assistance to improve coordinated entry

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all important	0	0%
Somewhat unimportant	2	11.76%
Somewhat important	7	41.18%
Very important	8	47.06%

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APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTATION OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The following sections document public engagement activities in the development of this plan. In addition to the plan notice and notice of public hearing, Cloudburst delivered a public presentation with an overview of the plan to the Continuum of Care and other interested parties on March 26th, 2026.

Plan Notice

The notice of plan development was posted on November 4, 2025 to the Benton County Government website and social media accounts and included a link to the public survey for input (see Appendix A).

Image 1: Notice of Plan Development on Benton County Website



Home » News »

2025-2030 Local Homeless Housing Plan

Posted on Tuesday November 04, 2025

November 4, 2025

Notice of Plan Development

Benton County Human Services is leading the development of Benton and Franklin Counties' Local Homeless Housing Plan for 2025-2030. Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) requires local jurisdictions to submit a local homeless housing plan every five years. Benton County Human Services is leading a bi-county advisory group in developing the 2025 - 2030 Benton and Franklin Counties Local Homeless Housing Plan. The stakeholders include representatives from organizations working directly in homeless services, behavioral health, and social services. Throughout the development process, we will be soliciting additional feedback from community members, other local representatives and service providers, and those with lived experience with homelessness. If you would like to participate in the development, please follow our social media for upcoming survey, listening session, and public comment opportunities. The anticipated completion date of the plan is February 28, 2026, and will be presented to the Benton and Franklin Counties Board of County Commissioners for formal adoption in March 2026.

NOTICE OF PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Local Homeless Housing Plan 2025-2030

BENTON COUNTY WA

Complete the Survey

Help improve partner engagement practices and homeless services provided in the county

Benton and Franklin Counties, with the support of The Cloudburst Group, is completing a Local Homelessness Plan as part of the Department of Commerce requirements. To inform this plan, we have assessed needs and gaps across the community and developed ideas for strategies to include in the plan. These strategies were presented to the Advisory Group, and Benton and Franklin Counties would appreciate your feedback on how important each of these strategies are to ending homelessness in our community.

Completing the questionnaire is voluntary and takes approximately 15 minutes. Your answers will help improve partner engagement practices and homeless services provided in the county. Your responses are confidential - your name, email address, and other identifying information is not collected. You may skip any question.

Access Survey

More News →

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Image 2: Notice of Plan Development on Benton County Facebook Page



Notice of Public Hearing

The Notice of Public Hearing was published on the County's social media, in the newspaper of record, and on the Human Services website. The online notices contained a link to the draft plan and to a survey where a comment could be provided.

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Image 3: Notice of Public Hearing on Benton County Facebook Page



Benton County, WA Government · Follow
Mar 3 ·

👉Notice of Public Hearing for the 2026-2030 Local Homeless & Housing Plan.
The plan is based on available data and projected local housing and service needs in the coming years. You can view the plan at the link below. We value community feedback.

View the Local Homeless Plan draft: tinyurl.com/yc72m8pe

Submit feedback on the Plan draft: tinyurl.com/mzcm5bn9

#bentoncountywa

Image 4: Notice of Public Hearing



Jerome Delvin, *District 1*
Michael Alvarez, *District 2*
Will McKay, *District 3*

COUNTY OF BENTON est.1905 WASHINGTON

Jerrod MacPherson
County Administrator
Matt Rasmussen
Deputy County Administrator

Board of County Commissioners

Notice of Public Hearing

Washington State Department of Commerce requires local jurisdictions to submit a local homeless housing plan every five years. Benton County Human Services has been working with local stakeholders to draft the Local Homeless Plan, which contains information for both Benton and Franklin Counties.

The Benton County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing to consider the adoption of the county's plan. The hearing is scheduled for March 31st with a final vote on April 14th. The public hearing will be held in the Commissioners Hearing Room #303, third floor of the Benton County Administration Building – 7122 W Okanogan Place, Kennewick. Access can be obtained via the Benton County Website; comments can be made by calling into the meeting at 509-460-4941.

A Spanish interpreter will be available.

The plan is based on available data and projected local housing and service needs in the coming years. We value any feedback you provide on this draft prior to finalization.

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Public Comments

The County received several comments during the 30-day public notice period. Benton County Human Services and the advisory group for this plan greatly appreciate the time and thought that went into this feedback. The comments received and responses are below.

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Table 42. Public Comments

Comment	Response
1.6 Strengthen partnerships with the business community Feedback: This goal is unclear. Outreach teams from Richland, Kennewick and Pasco already engage with businesses weekly, so concerns are already being heard. What is the CoC expected to do with that feedback? Is this meant to influence programs, funding, or policy? Suggested Change: Invite businesses or Chamber of Commerce representatives to attend CoC meetings. The CoC could also share information and resources at BID or other business meetings. 2.1 Establish partnerships with high schools and the community college for service learning and meaningful internship opportunities Feedback: Rather than the CoC creating a new program, consider connecting interested agencies with organizations that already coordinate internships and service-learning opportunities with local schools and colleges. 2.4 Offer continuing education and training for homeless service employees and partners Feedback: More clarity is needed. What type of training is envisioned? Who would lead it? Is funding identified to support this effort? 4.2 Conduct a needs assessment Suggested Change: Review existing needs assessments before creating a new one. 4.5 Establish case conferencing among providers Feedback: This could potentially be a CoC subcommittee, but there is currently no staff person responsible for facilitating it. Who would coordinate it and where would funding come from? Also, would discussions involve individual cases or only de-identified information? If individual cases are discussed, confidentiality requirements would need to be addressed. 4.6 Coordinate with transit for input on the needs of people experiencing homelessness Suggestion: Invite someone from Ben Franklin Transit to attend a CoC meeting and share information about their current assessments and planning work. Note: It was mentioned in the Appendix A survey results but not in the plan. It's imperative to the mission to add "very low barrier shelter". (accept those with drug or mental health issues as long as it isn't disruptive to the other shelter members)	The advisory group clarified businesses would be invited to CoC meetings. The advisory group clarified the intent is to leverage existing programs for internships. The advisory group clarified the intent of the training. The advisory group added that prior needs assessments will be reviewed. The advisory group clarified the confidentiality of case conferencing. The advisory group clarified coordination with transit. Low barrier shelter is the focus of strategy 5.1.

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Comment	Response
Ignore the negative comments and the push to ship homeless people out. You are also missing input and feedback around housing for individuals with developmental disabilities. Families supporting people with IDD also struggle with housing, and people with IDD also struggle with housing on their own. Consider partnerships with Partners4Housing and similar work to what Open Doors for Multicultural Families is doing with their Multicultural Village. Another thing that is not okay is the people with lived experience who were interviewed were all white, even though the community is not all white.	The advisory group recognized the need for housing for people with disabilities, including developmental disabilities. This is the focus of strategy 4.3. Cloudburst and the outreach teams made an effort to speak with people of all backgrounds and identity during outreach, travelling to numerous locations across Benton and Franklin Counties. Additional information on these efforts has been added to the
The county site provides next to no information about the annual PIT count. Which, is likely both intentional and aimed at minimizing the problem.	Benton County Human Services is committed to transparent reporting. In future years, the PIT report will be published on the Human Services website. Currently, information on all counties homeless systems can be found on the Department of Commerce website: https://www.commerce.wa.gov/homelessness-response/planning-and-reporting/pit-count/
Goal 1.5. We need to tighten up the work items in 2026 and 2027. “Begin coordinated encampment clearance” needs to begin sooner than 2028. Goal 5.6. Same comment. 5 years to develop written standards for County programs is way too long.	Benton County Human Services and its partners will work diligently to implement the strategies in the plan and expedite where possible. The timeline reflects what the advisory group felt would be most feasible.

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Comment	Response
Couple of things. Its missing a vision, values, and mission statement. Should mirror WW Five Year Plan (page 4): https://cms7files.revize.com/walladoch/FINAL%20Walla%20Walla%20County%205%20Year%20Homeless%20Housing%20Plan.pdf?t=202512041126530&t=202512041126530 Should also have language in how contents of the plan coincide with requirements of RCW 43.185C.050 and RCW 43.185C.160. In background it would be helpful to have a diagram of how households flow through local homeless crisis response system. See Page 6 of WW Homeless Plan: https://cms7files.revize.com/walladoch/FINAL%20Walla%20Walla%20County%205%20Year%20Homeless%20Housing%20Plan.pdf?t=202512041126530&t=202512041126530 For Benton County Page 6 it would be helpful to have a chart showing persons experiencing homelessness from 2016 onward. Page 9 of Walla Walla County Plan. I also think it would be helpful to have a breakout of wages needed for Fair Market Rent of various sized units in Benton County. Example is WW County Plan Page 12. I also think having a pie chart of breakouts of expenditure type in Homeless Housing for FY 2025 is advisable (Page 15 of WW Plan). Objectives we need to consider "Promote an equitable, accountable, and transparent homeless crisis response system" , "Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible" "Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm. " "Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs". Page 24 to 28 in WW County Homelessness Plan has Objectives and Measurements. I recommend pushing for something similar here. Also, for future planning you should run the State Department of Commerce Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT). This will help us understand gaps between housing at income levels and what we need.	The plan now includes the mission statement for the Continuum of Care. The advisory committee added a reference concerning the relevant RCWs. At the time this plan was written, no system flow map existed. However, this will be taken into consideration in the future. The advisory committee has included data on the population experiencing homelessness from 2022 to present. Earlier data was not included due to no PIT count being conducted during COVID and different reporting mechanisms prior to 2019. The advisory committee added a chart on Fair Market Rent and wages. A pie chart of expenditures is included in Section 2. The advisory committee has opted to include a timeline for each strategy rather than a single consolidated timeline. The HAPT is referenced throughout Section 4.
The biggest element to the plan is the lack of affordable housing. It is what boggs down the whole system. You can work in all areas identified but unless you can place individuals into housing, it's not going to make a big difference. You can streamline the system, you can add more workers, you can coordinate resources, you can inform community members and local governments but until you actually provide viable housing thats affordable you can not expect to improve the system until that major need is met.	The advisory committee acknowledges the importance of affordable housing, but all goals of the plan must be addressed per state requirements. These strategies will help support a continuum of resources to reduce homelessness. The advisory committee acknowledges the importance of a spectrum of housing resources. Shelter, transitional, supportive, and affordable housing have been addresses within the plan.

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Comment	Response
We need different types of homes including ; temporary interim housing, a 'true" low barrier shelter (not taking credit for a recovery center), affordable rent controlled housing, and areas for tiny homes for a specific population. Under 5.2 we need actual goals for building housing by 2030. The low barrier shelter Tiny homes ..cottages Even in the documentation it states"that as costs have increased, fewer people have been served in emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing. Part of the challenge is longer shelter stays as the result of the deeply constrained supply of affordable housing in the area. " Rapid rehousing has increased but the stability of the households to be able to maintain after subsidies is a concern. The funding availability needs more transparency. The two housing authority's don't provide what at is allocated to them. As Stewart's of those funds we should know how much and where those funds are being utilized. The counties also should have to provide more transparency. Under 5.1 the performance measurement must not be the completion of the Columbia ValleyCenter for Recovery. It must be the completion of a low barrier shelter not associated with this treatment center. The low barrier shelter needs to be a priority. The new Columbia Valley Center for recovery should not be considered as the option for a low barrier shelter. The housing (36 beds) that will be provided will be for those going through the treatment process. We need a low barrier shelter for who may not be in recovery, or others who need temporary housing while they are going through the process of getting help. There is a shelter being proposed under the non profit Tri City Alliance for the Unhoused. The performance measurement should identify the building of an actual low barrier shelter with in the 5 year plan. It should be available for many diverse individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The waiting list to get into affordable units is long, cumbersome and inadequate in number. The major set backs for most are income. You have to make two and half times the rent for most of the units whether they are full price, subsidized or discounted. You also have to have a background check performed for each apartment complex or home rental you apply for. That can be financially burdensome for those without money. The waiting list for the Kennewick Housing Authority and the CAC are very long and infrequently opened, many don't have the opportunity to	The scope of this homeless plan does not have any control over building projects localities may choose to adopt. As such, specific goals for unit development have not been included. Instead, the advisory committee has focused on actions the HRC and its partners can take to continue engagement that could build aligned funding and ongoing advocacy for affordable housing construction.. Many of the goals in the plan are aligned to reduce shelter stays. This has been emphasized this where appropriate. Housing Authority funds are outside of the jurisdiction of this plan. Section 5 speaks to where the plan encourages transparency with the funding administered by the HRC. The performance measure for strategy 5.1 was updated to the creation of low-barrier shelter. However, the HRC leaves open the possibility that the Recovery Center may be used for low barrier shelter in the future. As of the time of this plan, no contracts have been awarded to specific providers for the administration of low-barrier shelter. The plan cannot dictate rental unit processes, but instead encourages coordination with landlords. Where documentation may be able to be expedited are included as goals, which could expedite housing by reducing administrative processing times. The HRC does not have the authority to determine operations for outside agencies. Coordination with licensing was added to strategy 5.5. To promote greater clarity on the scope of the plan, the advisory committee added a statement on the funding and services included in this plan.

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Comment	Response
get on those lists. The amount available at any given time is small. Most of that population who are homeless or about to be struggle with finances. You can't even move forward in the system unless you have a source of revenue. The starting point for everyone is a job, ABD or SSDI, or SSI. Until you have one of those sources you cannot move through the system. Thats a starting point, that is not addressed in the plan. A flow sheet that shows the actual steps to follow through the process should be developed. Information on how to apply, locations of various agencies that will provide the needed documentation, phone numbers. People need to start at the DSHS office, apply for ABD and SSI or SSDI through the Social Security office. The second is you have to have documentation such as formal identification(driver's license, state identification card), social security card, birth certificate. Those lacking finances need to be able to get these types of identification. Once they get them, some lose them due to their circumstances. The state has the ability to provide identification for these individuals because many receive food stamps or Medicaid. There needs to be a coordination between those agencies and the Department of Licensing to allow the individuals to obtain id. I know DSHS provides a one time voucher for fees to give to the Department of Licensing but if you haven't had id before in the state or within 5 years you need further documentation just to use that voucher. The state already is providing services yet the Department of Licensing needs a rigorous set of documents to prove who you are. If the state is providing resources then they know who the person is, otherwise there is fraud going on. The state should be able to provide the Department of Licensing with a legal form stating the person is who they are and that should be acceptable based on the individual receiving state benefits. Create a MOU between the two agencies allowing for identification to be readily obtained. Petition for a discounted fee (even if they have been previously given an id) for those experiencing homelessness. Being moved around, or losing your place of residence or temporary encampment can contribute to the lose of documents. The needs for actual concrete performance measures on the actual building of housing is lacking in this plan. The cost of utilizing funds for hotel vouchers for individuals is staggering. I believe the county needs to use those resources to build interim housing until individuals are able to move into other stable housing. Every year that	

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Comment	Response
the plan is published we hear about the lack of housing yet we continue to push that down the road. It has to be addressed with concrete measures of actual house, a moratorium on building apartment or house that don't have affordability for those in the community who need it.	
Comment 1 - Why did you not provide data from the Department of Commerce's Snapshot report? Table 1 shows the number of homeless people based on the PIT counts (124 people for both Benton and Franklin County in 2025). The data in Table 1 is from a Department of Commerce Report, but the same Washington State Department of Commerce also has a Snapshot Report that shows a total of 6,603 people in Benton and Franklin County in 2025. https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/xonalo6msygtcjt0hr7ci7qjg8lug7rc/file/2169479104456. Ignoring an official State developed data set in this type of report gives the reader the opportunity to make assumptions regarding the County's motives for not including that dataset. If you do not want to consider other data then it would be appropriate to briefly disclose the existence of the Snapshot report and explain why this data was not appropriate for use in this report and why the PIT counts are a better data source for Table 1. Other options include providing both references and showing both sets of data separately or including both sets in Table 1 and providing a range (between 128 to 6,603) for the estimate of the number of homeless people in both counties. Comment 2 - You indicate that "these counts are often considered an underestimate of the true extent of homelessness", but based on the data in Figures 2 and 3 it is more accurate to say "based on data from other sources, these counts appear to significantly underestimate of the true extent of homelessness in the community". Comment 3 – The PIT count for Benton and Franklin counties as shown in Table 1 is 124 people. However, Figure 2 shows that in 2024-2025 there were 968 students in each of the Tri-City school districts that were experiencing homelessness. This does not make sense, and it leaves the reader wondering whether you really understand these data sources or whether you are intentionally trying to mislead the reader into thinking that there are significantly fewer homeless people in the counties than there really are. The solution is to provide	The advisory committee has added Snapshot data to the report. (1) The text now notes there are significant methodology and definitional differences between the Snapshot and PIT. (2) The student section notes there is a broader definition of homelessness used and these are different datasets. (3) Additional school districts fully within Benton and Franklin Counties have been added to the chart. Districts not fully within the county boundaries according to Washington Spatial Data were not included. (4) The advisory committee has opted not to make assumptions about family size and status without documentation. (5) The Snapshot data was added with additional context. (6) A definition and link to Washington 211 was added. In interviews with people experiencing homelessness, the multiple resources sheets on paper were noted as very problematic and 211 was preferred. This context was also added. (7) The language of strategy 1.3 was added. (8) Kennewick and Pasco were added to strategy 1.4. The total number of clients served was removed. (9) The language of strategy 1.5 was edited to be more person-centered. Richland Fire participated in the plan development and were included, though other fire departments are welcome to join this efforts. (10) These dates were determined to be feasible by the advisory committee, though if there are opportunities to expedite objectives Benton County Human Services will do so. (11) There have been discussions about locating low-barrier shelter at the Recovery Center and the

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Comment	Response
written context explaining the large discrepancy between Table 1 and Figure 2. Comment 4 - Figure 2 only provides numbers for the three largest school districts in Benton and Franklin County and neglects to mention that there is a total of 12 school districts in the two counties. The entire report focuses on both Benton and Franklin counties. But Figure 2 only focuses on three cities within those counties. The reader might also interpret this as an attempt to leave the reader with the impression that there are fewer unhoused people (students) in our two counties than there really are. Options include • Explain why you did not include the 314 unhoused students in 9 of the 12 school districts in the two counties. Note that this is a third more students (total of 1282) than what is shown in Figure 2. • Explain why you did not include the three districts that are adjacent to the ones you considered (Finley, Kiona-Benton and North Franklin), which would provide an additional 66 children. • Numbers below are based on 2024/2025 data (https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Home/Index). o Pasco – 244 o Kennewick – 509 o Richland - 215 o Prosser – 126 o Finley – 22 o Grandview- 70 o Paterson – 0 o Kiona/Benton - 13 o North Franklin – 31 o Othello – 39 o Kahlotus – 10 o Washtucna – 3 Comment 5 – Another way of estimating the unhoused population is to use Figures 2 and 3 to obtain an estimate of the number of unhoused people in the community. For example, you could make assumptions such as • each student in the two-county area (1282) lives in a family comprised of 1 adult and 2 school-age children, which would give 641 family units. • all households with only adults are single person households. This results in an estimated 2564 unhoused people in the two counties, which is 20 times higher than the estimate in Table 1. Note that this simplistic calculation ignores the households with unaccompanied youth, only children and parenting youth. It also assumes a 50/50 split of adults only and households with adults and minors, for the ease of illustration that Table 1 is not illustrative of the homelessness issue in Benton and Franklin Counties. Comment 6 – Your statement in the first paragraph of “Scope of Homelessness” indicates that “According to annual point-in-time estimates, there has been a decrease in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Benton and Franklin Counties in recent years.” However,	advisory committee does not want to rule it out as a future option. (12)

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Comment	Response
this is not the only conclusion that can be drawn from Table 1. The question is "is there really a decrease in the number of people experiencing homelessness" or "is there a decrease in the number of people willing to fill out and sign the PIT reports". Perhaps because of some of the laws regarding no sitting/no camping, we are not seeing a trend in homelessness as much as we are a trend in people that are willing to fill out and sign the PIT reports. It would be worthwhile to look at the trend in the Snapshot Report. Comment 7 - page 9 and 10 - Provide some text explaining what it means to ensure all resources are available on 211 and briefly describe what 211 is. It sounds like this is a great process for partners and volunteer groups. But please explain how this is helpful for unhoused people that may not know what 211 is, may not have access to a phone, may not know what questions to ask them on the phone, may not have a pen, pencil or paper to write down the information provided on the phone, or may not be comfortable with talking on the phone to begin with. Is there a method of getting to 211 if you don't have access to a phone? Comment 8– page 10 – 1.3 Strengthen Public Engagement. The term "service provider" is used without a definition or description of who the service provider is? "Additionally, in partnership with the CoC, the service provider will hold an "open house" at least annually so the community can meet with homelessness service providers and learn more about efforts to address homelessness." Saying that the "service provider will…meet with homelessness service providers" is confusing. Comment 9 - Table 6 – Timeline of Strategy 1.4, page 11. The performance measure is to be able to complete basic intake information for at least 25 clients annually. Why such a low target? That is one person every two weeks. Please provide more context as to why this target is so low. Also explain why only the Richland Fire and Parks are partners, and why not Kennewick and Pasco Fire and Parks. Comment 10 - Table 8 – Timeline of strategy 1.5. "Work with service providers to determine support that could be offered to encampments during clearances". Consider rephrasing to identify the target of the support (people). For instance, "that could be offered to people living in the encampments during clearances". My understanding	

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Comment	Response
is that at least some of the cities (Kennewick) provide a warning to people in an encampment before they clear the encampment. Could the providers show up at the time that this warning is made, or possibly the next day? Do you need to wait until the police show up to make people move? It seems less productive because the presence of the police makes any event seem more urgent and may not be the best time for people inhabiting encampments to think about their future. Again, why only the Richland Fire Department? Do Kennewick and Pasco not have the same issue? Comment 11 - Table 9, Timeline for Strategy 1.6 I understand that there are a lot of strategies that you have identified and probably not enough staff. But why wait until Fall of 2027 for the first listening session for business owners? I understand that some owners in business districts are very concerned right now about unhoused people near their businesses. I think you might want to try to get ahead of this even if you only had 2 or 3 questions going in (what is the degree of homelessness like near your business? How does this affect your business and your employees? What suggestions do you have for us?). Consider an ongoing metric such as 3 or 4 listening sessions a year rather than declaring victory at the end of 2027 after a single listening session? Comment 12 - Table 28 – Section 5.1 “Low-barrier shelter is a high priority for the county, as there are currently no facilities that do not have significant service requirements for high-acuity people experiencing homelessness. Whether through the Columbia Valley Center for Recovery or through another service provider that can safely operate a low-barrier shelter in a separate location, this will be a priority for future funding.” Does the long range plan for Columbia Valley Center for Recovery include a low-barrier shelter? If not, then why were they included in this section?	
My recommendation is to steer away from prioritizing "permanent supportive housing" (PSH) for capital projects serving homeless populations and simply prioritize "homeless" or "supportive housing". PSH requires the person to be homeless and have a "disabling condition" which then creates an issue with coupling permanent supportive housing with housing serving disabled individuals (HUD 811 program). If you simply prioritize housing for homeless with services it avoids this issue.	PSH is not prioritized for funding in Section 5, which includes all funding prioritization criteria. PSH is specifically names in Section 4 due to state requirements and the data in the HAPT tool.

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Comment	Response
General Feedback: The plan seems overly ambitious without planning for or allocating adequate resources to accomplish the many goals and objectives. Does Benton County Human Services have the time and resources to do all the things assigned in the plan? What is Benton County Human Services' plan for holding itself accountable for doing these things? The CoC is also designated as the lead for many strategies, but the CoC doesn't seem to be the appropriate lead for some of the strategies. The CoC doesn't have paid staff that leads work or projects. 1.6 Strengthen partnerships with the business community. Feedback: This seems odd. There are already outreach teams going out in Kennewick and Pasco each week. CoC members already understand concerns from businesses. What is the CoC supposed to do after a forum to address concerns? What is the intention of this goal? Is there funding tied? Program or funding changes? Suggested Change: Invite businesses/chamber of commerce to come to the CoC. Have the CoC share info and resources at BID or other relevant business meetings. 2.1 Establish partnerships with high schools and the community college for service learning and meaningful internship opportunities. Feedback: Instead of starting a program through the CoC consider connecting interested agencies with relevant community agencies organizing this type of work. 2.4 Offer continuing education and training for homeless service employees and partners. Feedback: More information needed on the intent behind this. What is the intent behind this? Who would lead this? Where would the funding come from? 4.2 Conduct a needs assessment. Suggested Change: Review existing needs assessments. 4.5 Establish case conferencing among providers. Feedback: While it could be a CoC subcommittee, there is no one who is paid to do this. Who is facilitating this? Where is the funding coming from to pay someone to facilitate? CoC leaders and members have other jobs or are volunteers. Would this be reviewing the cases of specific individuals or de-identified information? If this is individuals, this raises questions regarding confidentiality constraints. 4.6 Coordinate with transit for input on the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Feedback/Suggestion: Have someone from the Ben Franklin Transit attend CoC meetings and talk with them about their own assessment work.	Human services will be providing annual updates on progress against the plan. We recognize the ambitious goals presented while balancing what felt feasible through discussion with the advisory group and CoC partners. The plan has been updated to include inviting engaged business partners to the CoC meetings. Strategy 2.1 has been clarified that the intention is to work through existing internship programs. Strategy 2.4 has been clarified to leverage existing expertise within the community. Strategy 4.2 has been updated to review existing needs assessments. The intent of 4.5 is to review and collaborate on shared clients. Confidentiality concerns have been added to the plan. Strategy 4.6 has been updated to include inviting someone from transit to CoC meetings

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Comment	Response
The Plan reports activities to serve the homeless but seems to miss focusing on ending or reducing that population. Case in point. SECTION 4: ESTIMATES OF PERMANENT AND EMERGENCY HOUSING NEEDS p. 34 To calculate the need in 2030, the total need was estimated to grow evenly by year.	The mission of the CoC was added to increase the focus on ending homelessness. Section 4 follows the required information and methodology for this report according to state guidance.

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APPENDIX C: STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

The Cloudburst Group, the advisory group, and Benton County Human Services developed this plan in consultation with community stakeholders through listening sessions, individual interviews, and the advisory group. The table below describes the various collaborators instrumental to this project.

Table 43: Summary of Stakeholder Participation

Collaborator Type	Organization	Method of Participation
The two largest cities within the county or multi-county region.	City of Kennewick City of Richland City of Pasco	Interviews Listening sessions Advisory group
Individuals with lived experience of homelessness	Not applicable	Interviews; See Appendix D for a summary of lived experience engagement
A representative of a Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization **or** a Managed Care Organization	Benton-Franklin Health District Greater Columbia Behavioral Health	Listening sessions Advisory group
A representative from a By-and-For Organization within the local government's jurisdiction	Domestic Violence Services of Benton and Franklin Counties[5]	Listening sessions
Emergency shelter operators	Benton County Human Services Washington Monitoring Transitional Housing	Listening sessions Advisory group
Domestic violence/sexual assault shelter and housing providers	Domestic Violence Services of Benton and Franklin Counties	Listening sessions
Homeless outreach providers	Benton County Human Services Richland Fire Department Richland Parks	Listening sessions Advisory group
Rental subsidy administrators	Benton County Human Services City of Kennewick	Listening sessions Advisory group

[5] Domestic Violence Services of Benton and Franklin Counties is classified as a By-and-For Organization. Efforts were made by The Cloudburst Group and Benton County Human Services to recruit additional cultural organizations for this plan. However, they declined to participate after numerous engagement attempts.

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Collaborator Type	Organization	Method of Participation
	City of Pasco	
Permanent supportive housing providers and operators	Catholic Charities	Interviews
Coordinated entry staff	Benton County Human Services	Listening sessions Advisory group
Additional collaborators	Goodwill Pasco Library Richland Library City of Pasco Elected Officials Benton-Franklin Community Action Connection Lourdes Health Benton-Franklin CoC Camo Dave Ministry	Interviews Listening sessions Advisory group

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APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Between August 5 and August 8, 2025, The Cloudburst Group staff conducted interviews with 16 people who were experiencing homelessness or housing instability, including those recently housed from a homeless situation. Interview participants represented different demographics, family compositions, backgrounds, and needs (e.g., disabling conditions) and included those who had been both sheltered and unsheltered. Staff traveled to three area libraries, the Richland Community Center, shadowed the outreach team across several parks, a church event in Kennewick, and visited commercial outdoor locations known to have people experiencing homelessness. While every effort was made to speak with people of different identities, all of the people who agreed to be interviewed identified as white. Staff conducted interviews as participants became available and compensated them for their time with a $20 gift card. The following were common themes across the interviews as they relate to homelessness plan goals.

Experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Approximately 75 percent of the interviewees were currently unsheltered, though most had experienced unsheltered homelessness at least briefly. This experience was marked by attempts at avoiding detection from police, others who might report them, and occasionally, even other people experiencing homelessness. Interviewees noted that being found could lead to police citation, victimization by others, and the need to move to a new area. Several interviewees were staying in their vehicles, which required looking for safe places to park overnight, while those living unsheltered generally camped outdoors in the local parks or by the river. Camping posed numerous challenges and safety risks, but when individuals were unable to access shelter, it was their only option. Interviewees described a mixed experience with outreach workers: several expressed gratitude and positive experiences, some were hesitant to engage due to outreach workers' perceived proximity to law enforcement and the negative experiences related to police, and others were unaware of the outreach team that went out weekly, but were appreciative of a variety of support, including free meals from local organizations. Individuals noted that there was not enough outreach to cover the full spectrum of needs.

Access to low-barrier shelter and transitional housing.

Many interviewees had difficulty finding shelter or emergency housing options (e.g., motels paid for by the Benton County Human Services). Shelter options in the Tri-Cities area are very limited and often have strict rules for acceptance into the program. Availability of non-congregate shelter options did not keep up with demand, and it forced individuals to return multiple times to try to secure shelter. Individuals agreed there should be more emergency shelter in Benton-Franklin counties, that there should be shelter options for those who have families and children of the opposite gender of the parent, and that shelters should not have strict entry and exit times to accommodate work schedules.

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Not all shelter was considered acceptable or accessible.

Many interviewees opted not to stay in the one low-barrier congregate shelter available in the Tri-Cities area, as those facilities were viewed as unclean and had strict attendance policies tied to staying there. Other available shelters also had attendance requirements, such as the shelter serving women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Coordination of services.

Interviewees felt that shelter and related services should be more accessible and coordinated. Most of the individuals actively experiencing unsheltered homelessness were unaware of the shelter options available to them or where to go to get more information. Those who were able to submit housing-related forms felt that the follow-up regarding their housing status was not always consistent. Many of the individuals interviewed also received Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), but did not feel knowledgeable about the services available to them.

Access to permanent housing.

Affordable housing was most often the top need expressed by interviewees, and all of the interviewees stated that there was a shortage of affordable housing in the Tri-Cities area. This was of particular concern for individuals who were in substance use recovery, as affordable housing places did not tend to be in locations that supported recovery. Interviewees had difficulty navigating the housing market, which they were often doing without the support of case managers. Two interviewees had subsidized housing secured through a local program at the time of the interview. Most of the others interviewed wanted housing vouchers to then be able to look for housing, but were unsuccessful in securing the needed vouchers. A barrier to receiving housing vouchers was a lack of required documentation. Several currently unsheltered individuals had their identification stolen and did not have the funds or transportation to replace it.

Housing stability.

Interviewees stated they would be willing to participate in services to obtain or maintain housing; however, they were largely unaware of available housing that required engagement in such services. Several interviewees were receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and most interviewees received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Requested services by interviewees included adult day centers where individuals could bathe, laundry facilities, bus vouchers, and access to in-patient drug rehabilitation services that did not require travel to Yakima or Spokane.

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Table 44: Interview Participant Demographics

Interviewee	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Household Type	Employment Status	Housing Situation
1	Man	White	Adult & children	Full-time	Recently housed
2	Woman	White	Adult & children	Unemployed	Recently Housed
3	Man	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
4	Man	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
5	Man	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
6	Man	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
7	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
8	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
9	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
10	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
11	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
12	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
13	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
14	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
15	Woman	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered
16	Man	White	Single adult	Unemployed	Unsheltered

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APPENDIX E: SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSIONS AND PARTNER INTERVIEWS

Between August 6 and August 7, 2025, The Cloudburst Group staff conducted three 90-minute listening sessions with 20 representatives of city or social services in Benton and Franklin Counties, specifically in the Tri-Cities area (Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland). From August to November of 2025, Benton County Human Services also conducted interviews with homeless service providers, supportive services providers (e.g., medical services), and partners outside of homeless services that were nonetheless in contact with those experiencing housing instability, such as the public library. The following were common themes across the listening sessions and partner interviews as they relate to homelessness plan goals.

Key issues in the homelessness crisis response system.

The conversations highlighted a variety and interconnectedness of barriers within the homelessness crisis response system. Participants consistently emphasized the lack of affordable housing as the main challenge, noting that even "affordable" units remain out of reach for many, with high income requirements and market rents exceeding $1,200 for a one-bedroom apartment. Several participants described how these housing barriers are compounded by issues such as poor credit, limited upfront funds, and fixed incomes. Others pointed to systemic challenges, such as siloed agencies, limited funding, and NIMBYism (Not in My Back Yard) that fragment efforts and restrict the ability to expand housing options. The conversations also raised concerns about the high cost and limited effectiveness of emergency shelters, especially for individuals with behavioral health needs. Across all the conversations, participants highlighted gaps in transportation, language access, and communication among service providers.

Collaborative and preventive approaches to ending homelessness.

Participants discussed the importance of proactive, coordinated strategies to prevent homelessness and create sustainable housing solutions. They acknowledged that a coordinated, well-funded system is necessary to address immediate needs and root causes. Case management and consistent screening for housing programs were stated as critical tools for early intervention and stabilization. Other suggestions included developing low-barrier shelters that integrate on-site services, investing in affordable and subsidized housing, and providing publicly owned housing options managed at the county or city level. They suggested expanding access to mental health care, substance use treatment, life skills training, and job opportunities as tools to prevent housing instability.

Participants discussed the need for stronger incentives for landlords and developers, greater flexibility in funding, and state support for recovery homes and supportive housing models. The need for long-term subsidies and flexible financial assistance was noted as essential for stability. Participants also pointed to local efforts, such as zoning changes to enable affordable housing in Pasco, while

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acknowledging barriers faced by developers and agencies due to limited coordination. Finally, participants discussed the importance of cross-sector collaboration, such as involving public, nonprofit, and private partners to align resources, reduce barriers, and address the root causes of homelessness.

Strengthening and supporting the homeless service provider workforce.

Most participants stated that a stronger, more coordinated service provider network is essential to improving outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Key suggestions included creating a unified application system for people experiencing homelessness to streamline access to services and implementing weekly case management meetings among agencies to enhance collaboration and case review. The conversations also highlighted the need to reduce caseloads by increasing staffing and suggested incentivizing job positions to encourage individuals to apply for direct service jobs. Participants also identified training for case managers as crucial to ensure equity, cultural competency, and the reduction of bias in service delivery.

Promoting an equitable, transparent, and inclusive homeless response system.

Most participants believed that services were currently equitable and inclusive to those in the community. However, they discussed the importance of building a homelessness response system that is representative and understood by the broader community. A key focus was the need for public education campaigns to address misconceptions about homelessness, combat NIMBYism, and highlight the benefits of supportive services. In addition to sharing the importance of supportive services, participants highlighted general communication to the public about available programs, especially for underserved communities, as essential to building community trust and improving access to services.

Participants suggested tracking client metrics to ensure fair representation and consistent outcomes across populations. Several participants proposed creating a single, shared data system to improve coordination and service delivery among agencies but recognized there were limitations to getting something similar established, such as limited funding and the concern about sharing publicly identifiable information. Participants discussed establishing an advisory board that includes representatives from the full housing spectrum, such as developers, bankers, and faith leaders, as a way to enhance community collaboration and accountability. Finally, participants also stressed the need to continue inclusive practices, such as offering enhanced language and transportation options, flexible service hours, and 24/7 resource availability whenever possible.

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Table 45: Listening Session Organizations Represented

Date attended	Time	City	Organization
August 6, 2025	10:00am	Richland	Department of Human Services
August 6, 2025	10:00am	Kennewick	Council Member
August 6, 2025	10:00am	Richland	CDBG/HOME Program
August 6, 2025	10:00am	Kennewick	Office of Community Planning
August 6, 2025	10:00am	Kennewick	Greater Columbia Behavioral Health
August 6, 2025	10:00am	Kennewick	Greater Columbia Behavioral Health
August 6, 2025	10:00am	Richland	Fire Department
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	N/A	Washington Alliance for Quality Recovery Residences
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	Pasco	Council Member
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	Pasco	Goodwill
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	Pasco	Goodwill
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	Richland	Department of Human Services
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	Richland	Department of Human Services
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	Richland	Development Services
August 6, 2025	2:00pm	Richland	Department of Human Services
August 7, 2025	10:00am	Kennewick	Domestic Violence Services of Benton and Franklin Counties
August 7, 2025	10:00am	Kennewick	CDBG Program
August 7, 2025	10:00am	Pasco	CDBG Program
August 7, 2025	10:00am	Pasco	City Planning
August 7, 2025	10:00am	Richland	Department of Human Services