

# Responding Effectively as a Region to Unsheltered Homelessness in the Twin Cities Metro Area

## Progress Report – September 19, 2019

At the June 3, 2019 meeting the Public Sector Leadership Team recommended a smaller workgroup with representation from regional entities be convened to identify priorities and opportunities for driving toward implementation of the Design Team recommendations, including a continued focus on identifying regional approaches. In response, a county-state workgroup did significant work over the summer and have identified specific priorities and opportunities within their agencies to advance those recommendations. While all of these efforts remain dynamic, this document summarizes the overall activities to date. For questions or suggested additions or changes to this document, please contact Margaret King, Regional Manager-Unsheltered Homelessness, Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness [Margaret.King@state.mn.us](mailto:Margaret.King@state.mn.us) Or 651-296-2387

Global observations include:

- Public sector agencies have been working to identify viable ways to increase capacity across the region, and some of those items have advanced in their development.
- These partners have identified a willingness and specific opportunities to advance the recommendations, but may not be able to seize these opportunities given current resources.
- There are divergent levels of public will, attention, and leadership support on this issue across the region, owing in part to the relative visibility of unsheltered homelessness in each community.
- For most public systems, new investments can only occur through a defined process that occurs on a set schedule, which can impede the ability for public systems to be quick or nimble.
- There are opportunities to partner with private sector funders to assist with speed or nimbleness; the Design Team presented their recommendations to a group of private sector leaders on May 28.
- Philanthropic leaders continue to be highly engaged in this work and have begun making targeted investments in building regional approaches.

The following table summarizes the activities that have occurred on each of the Design Team’s high-priority recommendations, including a rough rating on a 0 – 10 scale of how much progress this activity represents from no activity (0) to fully satisfying the recommendation (10). While this is rough, we hope it gives us a template to consider for monitoring progress as we go forward.

### Foundational components

Recommendation	Progress	Progress rating
Commit to the goal of ending unsheltered homelessness as quickly as possible, and set an assertive timetable for doing so.	The Public Sector Leadership Team has been consistently engaged and has expressed strong commitment. We have	3

	not landed on an agreed upon timetable.	
Task a small group representing the public sector to determine a viable path for managing efforts to end unsheltered homelessness regionally on an ongoing basis.	A work group met several times and has identified a set of priorities and opportunities in each entity. Philanthropy has begun investing in regional management capacity start up.	5
Develop and use clear, shared messages that promote public awareness of unsheltered homelessness and its solutions in ways that include a nuanced social, historical, and racial narrative.	Met Council has retained a communications firm to work together with the state on crafting public messaging about unsheltered homelessness and its solutions.	3

## System Components

### *Sufficient and coordinated outreach*

Recommendation	Progress	Progress rating
Convene funders and providers of outreach to determine how services can be better coordinated, to identify options for making flexible funding available to outreach teams, to develop common understanding of the benefits of improved coordination, to analyze where outreach is needed, and to determine / assign responsibility for outreach coordination.	<p>Separate discussions underway in Hennepin and Ramsey counties. While there has not been one large convening with both counties, there are conversations underway about how to provide additional outreach capacity and coordination, and there is a weekly coordination meeting between outreach providers, law enforcement, city and county staff in Hennepin focusing on encampments.</p> <p>MNDoT has contracted with an outreach provider to engage people sleeping in encampments and coordinates with other agencies, including law enforcement, weekly.</p> <p>Met Council has increased their outreach partner's capacity to engage folks sleeping on transit.</p>	4
Create consistent availability of mobile assessments for coordinated entry throughout the region.	Met Council HAT team has launched a Mobile Assessment Van.	2

Develop an approach for providing expedited (e.g., presumptive eligibility for) access to county-administered benefits (GA, SSI, EA, etc.).	No known progress.	0
Develop a funding model for and begin to implement 24/7 outreach with immediate access to flexible funds and other resources across the region.	Discussions in progress to create additional outreach capacity in several communities.  DHS increased outreach investment in last session	4

*Sufficient shelter and crisis response with few or no barriers*

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Progress rating</b>
Convene shelter funders and providers to establish shared values and standards of care across all shelter operations, anticipating growth.	Preliminary discussions in several counties and at the state level about models of shelter needed to respond to need. Development of recommendations from They Help Each Other project.	3
Commit to and develop cost estimates, budgets, and plans for creating a net increase of 300 – 600 person capacity in housing-focused crisis, navigation, medical respite, and housing stabilization beds in small, welcoming and inclusive settings across the region specifically focused on engaging unsheltered people, improving geographic distribution of and financial responsibility for shelter, and providing options for culturally-specific and culturally-responsive shelter. Implementation of this recommendation should attend to the anticipated loss of “winter” shelter beds, which would result in reduced capacity and a larger required expansion of capacity.	Progress made in metro county workgroup to identify options for adding capacity, largely contingent on identifying new funding.	5
	In Ramsey County, solicitation of a vendor is still underway to operate the winter safe space year round after capital improvements are made.  Resources from DHS and Met Council supported an additional 35 beds at Higher Ground to increase flow out of existing shelters to open additional beds.	No progress  4

Recommendation	Progress	Progress rating
Establish incentives for higher credentials, training, experience, wages and lower caseloads in competitive processes to award shelter funding, to prepare for shelter expansion, mitigate staff turnover, facilitate recruitment, and support more qualified shelter staff.	No known progress.	0
Expand bed capacity by the amount committed.	Net loss of shelter capacity with closure of winter shelter space and service navigation center. Ramsey committed to funding winter safe space year, currently seeking an operator.	1

*Direct access to permanent, affordable housing*

Recommendation	Progress	Progress rating
Deepen engagement and collaboration with and create incentives for property owners to provide housing options for those coming out of homelessness.	Identification of resources to expand landlord risk mitigation funds.	3
Identify start-up funding for providers needed to leverage the DHS Housing Supports program to create additional supportive housing capacity.	<p>Secured public and private capital funding to enable a Native-focused supportive housing provider to purchase site and quickly launch permanent housing for 18 individuals leveraging state housing supports for ongoing operating.</p> <p>Metro Demo Project leveraging Housing Supports to connect housing and ongoing services so people on transit who are unsheltered can more effectively utilize housing vouchers from the Met Council.</p>	6
Set aside or prioritize a portion of rental assistance allocated by PHAs to unsheltered populations.	<p>Regional move-up initiative: vouchers to people in supportive housing who no longer need support, to free up capacity for unsheltered individuals.</p> <p>St. Paul PHA, Minneapolis PHA and Metro HRA collectively applied to HUD for up to 350 new housing choice vouchers with intention to prioritize portion for unsheltered.</p>	5

