

Nashville CoC – Cloudburst HUD -Technical Assistance

Notes from Site Visit #1, November 9-10, 2016

FOR COMMUNITY DISTRIBUTION

November 9:

HUD Kick-off and Cloudburst orientation

9:30 – 11:00 AM

Orientation to HUD Technical Assistance, introductions to TA team and approach.

TA understanding of assignment – focus on restructuring governance to streamline decision processes and clarify responsibilities. Secondly, identify areas to strengthen the CoC.

Local leadership offered perspectives on changes and trends in Nashville's homeless services environment; issues discussed include: providers whose programs have been defunded; fragmented system with a lack of participation; differences of opinion over Focus Strategies report, and over Housing First/Transitional Housing.

Overall eagerness and readiness for change, broad agreement that success includes a simpler governance structure.

Mayor's Office/MHC staff and leaders

1:00 – 2:30 PM

Established to carry out Nashville's 10-year plan to end homelessness. Coordination and planning support, and more recently, MHC staff working on street outreach, case management, coordinated entry, landlord recruitment, How's Nashville, etc. Housed within Metro Social Services.

Reluctance to hurt colleagues' feelings has held community back from making hard choices to improve the overall system. Focus Strategies report touched off strong reactions and hurt local relationships.

Ongoing lack of clarity re: accountability and authority for Nashville's homeless system is challenging and slows progress. There is no "backbone" entity. Strong desire to align the service system with HUD and the city, for greatest results.

Nashville Rescue Mission

2:45 – 4 PM

Large organization with 24-hour facility, as well as a campus for women and children and a second campus for men, emergency services, transitional housing and a 12-month recovery program. Prominent organizational leader for robust church- and home-based hosting programs in the community.

For many years the Mission remained "in their own sandbox." New leaders are interested exploring closer collaboration and participation. The Mission is open to sharing its data, and to participating in CoC membership, committee and leadership roles.

November 10:

CoC Governing Board

9:00 – 10:30 AM

Board has been in place for six years, with rotating membership. The Board's focus is on prioritizing projects, "keeping the peace" among member organizations. Currently working to revise Charter and By-Laws.

There is low participation in the CoC. Recommendations from the Focus Strategies report were too forceful and the data was seen as suspect; these are among the reasons that the Focus Strategies consultation did not help to move decisions about governance along.

There is a need for discussion of HMIS and new ways to use data to guide planning and allocation, as well as new consensus about using HMIS as the platform for Coordinated Entry.

CoC general membership

11-12:30 PM

TA team explained TA approach, and provided CoC members with orientation to relevant HEARTH Act changes and requirements, notably of CoCs and CoC governance.

CoC members spoke to fragmentation at the system level, with a lack of collaboration. There is no coordinated system or clear path to implement decisions made during meetings. While there is interest in identifying additional funding streams for services, there is a fear of programs having their funds cut off and a "protect yourself" culture persists.

Community members need help in approaching potential new funders, and want to see clear evidence of the value of the changes they are asked to undertake and live with. There is positive energy to improve services and outcomes, and belief that progress is achievable.

MDHA staff and leaders

1:30-3 PM

MDHA administers all HUD affordable housing, community development, and homeless programs, and is also the city's Public Housing Authority. These programs are part of MDHA's active development presence in the City. MDHA administers programs directly and by subcontracting, has strong grants and financial management capacity.

MDHA would like to take a more active role in the CoC, including voting at the Board level and bringing additional housing resources to homeless-oriented projects. Staff see opportunity for greater impact and are eager to work with others on a governance/decision-making structure that will allow the community to take on more and different initiatives.

KEY/RECURRING POINTS

Nashville's CoC has a fragmented system with a need for a simpler and more influential governance structure. There is a great foundation of highly competent individuals and organizations willing to work together to foster change and end homelessness in Nashville. With a stronger and more unified system at the top to drive strategic planning, Nashville can improve its CoC as a whole.

NEXT STEPS:

The TA team will be in contact with the HUD office and representatives of the Homeless Commission, MDHA and the CoC Governing Board, to plan the next visit and set of meetings.