

## NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON COUNTY COC – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Notes from Community Meeting and Themes from the Listening Session

January 13, 2017

Sonny West Conference Center

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#### Overview of Community Meeting

On Thursday, January 13, 2017, HUD-funded consultants from the Cloudburst Group convened a Community Meeting with stakeholders and local government representatives. The Community Meeting followed a Steering Committee meeting held the previous day. At that [Steering Committee] session, Cloudburst presented information on the HEARTH Act and what it requires of a community's Continuum of Care in relation to governance (decision-making and leadership) and management (of grants, annual rating and strategic allocation, and using local data to guide planning). The presentation drew on examples of governance approaches and structures for leadership and management that have effectively reduced homelessness and improved system outcomes. Governance models from Houston and Salt Lake City were particularly emphasized. (Meeting notes from the Steering Committee meeting were sent out under separate cover; please refer to those notes for more information about that session.)

At the Community Meeting, Cloudburst repeated the presentation and facilitated a community discussion with a broad and diverse group of invested Nashville stakeholders. The consultants shared several observations, including the broad openness to change they have found across the community, and the assets that Nashville has in having elected leaders as well as the local housing agency and authority concerned about and involved in homelessness service delivery. Individuals articulated a range of concerns, some optimism, an openness to change, and useful clarity about how they see the current system falling short and a few things that could help them visualize an expanded homeless-serving Continuum of Care in Nashville. A few themes emerged:

#### Themes from Community Meeting

- ***Community members would like to have a singular vision.*** They are eager for system-level improvements and to streamline and align homeless planning bodies. They are clear that in order for their sector to embrace a new governance structure and process, there will need to be ongoing involvement by providers and advocates at a leadership level. There is cautious optimism, for some, that a new relationship with government counterparts is attainable, one that is both more strategic and more supportive.

Community members want and need a better understanding about what is required by the HEARTH Act, about how a CoC should operate and its governance should work. Everyone will need to be involved in creating a more diverse CoC that supports broad leadership and decision-making that is transparent.

- ***Local government has been viewed as non-responsive, over time.*** [Provider] Agency staff feel that, in general, government entities in Nashville are not particularly concerned about or supportive of their needs. People have longstanding disconnect in relation to all city entities – MDHA, MSS, Metro government, and the Homelessness Commission. Expectations for improvement are not high.

- ***People want to understand more about ways that non-funded agencies are active participants in diverse CoCs.*** They would like to see concrete examples of ways that CoCs have brought in new funding sources, and how these funds have been deployed effectively.

### **Overview of the Listening Session**

Later that day, the Cloudburst Group met with stakeholders without the presence of local government leaders. The following themes emerged:

#### **Themes from Listening Session**

- ***For some, trust has been lost.*** A small but vocal number of community members express doubt that real change is possible, after the longstanding negative practices and dynamics that have built up over time.
- ***Change must increase clarity.*** Community members need clarity and simplicity. They need to know who has the authority to make specific decisions. At the current time, no single entity is clearly empowered to make leadership decisions. Providers want to know where in the structure they will contribute to decision making and leadership.
- ***Providers are thinking about resources.*** Early on in discussion of proposed options, community members will need to understand where existing resources will flow, where there are gaps, strategic routes the CoC will explore to fill those gaps, and who will be responsible for carrying out this work.
- ***Thoughts on other key sectors.*** Communication with private funders has been uncoordinated and at times contradictory, and this needs to be remedied so as to increase their investment in CoC activities. MDHA's development policy has appeared to skew toward higher-end uses; incorporating housing for homeless households into that agency's overall investment strategy would be very meaningful.
- ***Current staff capacity is not adequate to support change.*** As hard as MDHA staff are working, they are viewed as hard-pressed by their workload even comply with basic requirements. It's not realistic to think that current staff can take on and maintain the expanded responsibilities involved in Nashville's CoC growing in strategic impact and funding complexity. This is seen as true particularly with regard to HMIS: increasing coverage and effective data analysis, needed to guide planning based on the full homeless community in Nashville, will require additional HMIS staff.
- ***Communication and participation are critical.*** Community members appreciate that they are involved in the ongoing Technical Assistance process. They were very pleased to have the opportunity to talk with each other about these strategic issues as well as discussing concrete ones such as strengthening the community's Coordinated Entry system.

### **Next Steps**

The Steering Committee will meet again on Wednesday, February 1, from 1pm – 4pm, and a Community Meeting will be held on February 2, from 9am - Noon. Cloudburst will present a set of structural options for consideration, and stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide their input at the Community Meeting. Both meetings will occur in the chapel at the Nashville Rescue Mission, 639 Lafayette Street, Nashville 37203.