



# Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - [info@pchomeless.org](mailto:info@pchomeless.org)

**Are there specific strategies or approaches you believe the URA should support? What criteria should we use to assess other plans or models in regards to appropriateness and feasibility?**

**Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 9.2.22**

“It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit,  
And to know that all the blessed dead are standing about you and watching.”

— Kahil Gibran, *On Work*

## **Model comparison considerations**

- We do have some regional models: PSRC is a good one.
- Criteria for success will need to look at outcomes over time
- Tease out and understand the components, values, particular strategies, etc. of the program that make it successful. This way these can be assessed as to whether they work in Tacoma. For example, if community and peer support is integral to a program, we need to know this... and know if this aspect is not applied in Tacoma that reasons the model is successful is being changed/ignored.
- Comparing other URA models it can be like comparing apples to oranges. Are there unique factors specific to the other models/other geographies that are making it work. Are those factors true or plausible in Tacoma? For example, rents, salaries, housing prices and stock.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of an office partnering with county/cities/others vs. something centered in the county? Please explore this with research openly and thoroughly.
- A coordinating role would be more successful than a command & control identity. Doesn't believe PC would go along with a central command.
- Puyallup river watershed is an example of a successful coordination model in Pierce County, instead of centralized command. Coordination effort could be housed within the county?
- Data is huge to find out what's working and not working. How are these systems accurately accounting?
- Ways to reduce silos around all the different jurisdictions and their zoning differences, their different bureaucratic requirements that slow down ability to be creative in responding to emergency situation.
- Use examples to build a scoring matrix for effective programs and strategies to help choose what are the “best” programs and strategies. Include providers, jurisdictions, all stakeholders, etc. in the scoring development and process.

## **Strategies and approaches URA should support**

- Success includes better supports in areas outside of Tacoma/Central Pierce County.
- Bring in more resources from private sources, philanthropy, and public sources without increasing grant competition.



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- One thing URA can do is get head counts (i.e., point-in-time counts) done consistently and more adequately and accurately. For example, better ways to count and counting more often, like once a quarter instead of once a year.
- Lived Experience oversight committee of URA—don't trust folks to get it right without direct experience. A lived experience oversight committee with real oversight power, not just in name. Probably unlikely, but it would be great to have someone in the room to say, well that's a good idea, or that's actually a bad idea.
- Seattle/King Co lauded by HUD for being highly successful at distributing housing vouchers (60% v 5%), because they have an abundance of lived experience baked into the system.
- Prioritize and improve success at reducing homelessness for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people? Small organizations are busy and can't always see through the weeds. How can we prioritize data, accountability, and best practices related to racial equity?
- Equity and anti-racism in contracting has to be applied. Now, it seems, County dictates what needs to be done more than trusting and looking to the expertise and skill of providers, particularly smaller, local providers. Partnerships between contracted parties need to be developed versus a dictatorial type relationship from the funder.
- Do an assessment of housing options currently available and the full scheme of what being unhoused looks like (Including couch-surfing) and address them all.
- Equity informed and evidence-based approaches should be supported. Strategies and approaches must be innovative.
- Getting police out of the equation, stopping sweeps. Homeless services shouldn't be under the purview of city managers. A central command for this type of work probably won't make sense—the more networked, smaller neighborhood-focused groups would be more fluid, more adaptable—decentralized. Meets the needs of the rapidly changing community.
- A unified office would increase communication between the various jurisdictions and orgs. Coordinate inclement weather triggers, services, etc., and help reduce politically motivated decisions being made into policy. The Continuum of Care board would be the backbone and not a shifting set of political players.
- Current communication from cities and county is abysmal. URA could coordinate better messaging. Supporting communications between organizations and up to the public when they need support for coordinating messaging.
- A third-party coordinator could help resolve conflicts between jurisdictions.
- Urged investigation of the multiple empty properties as sites for temporary AND permanent housing.
- Ensure that there are adequate staff at the county to work on gaining grants for state and federal housing dollars that could fund property purchase, eg buying current mobile home parks (before they are all bought by private developers), and already existing low income housing that could be renovated.
- Perhaps a county staff person (with regional approach rather than office) could be hired to help smaller jurisdictions gain state/federal funds to meet their specific needs for low-income housing?



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- Speed up permitting processes for work with private and not-for-profit developers.
- Need to coordinate info across groups; Provide resources to communities with the greatest need.
- Need to centralize calls for help.
- Strength of our coalition has been power sharing; this group needs to empower the bottom-up perspectives of direct service providers and people with lived experience. Listen to the boots on the ground that know what's really happening.
- Provide a place for true collaboration — as in using common metrics to form common goals — among service providers *and* true collaboration among groups that haven't or aren't typically talking with each other, like providers collaborating with businesses and neighborhoods/homeowners being affected by homelessness.
- Pierce County needs help (this is diplomatic) in the contracts department. Contracts don't get created, signed, or payments made in any sort of timely fashion. This would have to be fixed if a URA office was in the County
- Focus resources and accountability around meeting client outcomes. Show that money and resources are meeting the real needs that are out there. Ensure that case management has accountability for both service providers and clients. Have discharge from programs for non-compliance; people being served need to be incentivized to meet deadlines so resources are not tied up in the waiting.

## Other considerations

- Can the decision-making be approached like a PTA, with each member jurisdiction with one vote? Regional approach has to be bought into. Allow each jurisdiction to express their frustrations and grievances, then map the similarities and overlaps and then have the jurisdictions work together to problem solve areas that they have in common.
- Having local authority would allow for the elimination of ability for folks to be swept from City to City, community to community. The interconnectedness would allow for a collaborative approach.
- Hard to get new buy in at this stage—may have missed that opportunity. Maybe the consultants can still build those relationships and ask those smaller communities to weigh in as a part of this process.
- Free breakfast and lunch to everyone at schools to reduce stigma for homeless and poor kids.
- Discussed the value of people living homeless who have building skills being recruited for building tiny home options where appropriate.
- Very skeptical that the place for URA is a government office, simply due to the nature of government – leadership changes often and this leads to priority changes and funding changes. The need for government to respond to all voters and constituents makes it hard to take brave, creative, “big idea” steps.