

Chittenden County Homeless Alliance Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

Monday, March 17th, 2025

11:00AM – 12:30PM

[Meeting Link](#)

Strategic Planning Committee

To move the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA) toward its mission to prevent and end homelessness, the Strategic Planning Committee will work to identify current gaps in the system and work to ensure decisions of sub-Committees and Steering Committee decisions are influenced and informed by relevant data sources. This includes assessment and analysis of racial disparities, and housing and service challenges in the CCHA, and developing annual strategies for implementation.

The Strategic Planning Committee will report at each of the Steering Committee Meetings on current strategies, progress toward goals, and other key information. The Strategic Planning Committee will review all HUD directives and policy briefs to provide guidance in CCHA planning. Building a resource development, the Strategic Planning Committee is charged with ensuring sustainable funding to support the goals of the CCHA, in partnership with the Steering Committee.

The Strategic Planning Committee convenes work groups and hosts working retreats of officers and committee chairs to draft committee charters and develop an integrated and mutually reinforcing workplan to implement the strategic plan and hosts an annual retreat to assess progress and set benchmarks for the strategic plan implementation.

MINUTES

1. Introductions and Announcements

10 minutes

Mike McCarthy, from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA), joined the Committee to replace Alyssa Peteani now that she is no longer with VHFA.

2. How to Engage People with Lived Experience (PWLE)

20 minutes

Amy Carmola has been brainstorming ideas to make the Steering Committee meeting more inviting for people with lived experience.

The goals of engagement include transparency, providing a venue for voices of lived experience to be heard, and to allow voices of lived experience to influence how the CCHA operates.

Amy posited that the CCHA is not set up to respond to the questions received from PWLE in Steering Committee meetings. Ari Kisler agreed with the question of whether the Steering Committee meeting is the right venue. She mentioned the Steering Committee's business tasks are not ideal for bringing PWLE into the conversation, coming from her experience with the Balance of State Continuum of Care (BOS). She said the BOS has started to host a quarterly membership meeting that is designed to bring in anyone who is a member of the BOS, not just voting organizations. The membership meetings often offer training or an open dialogue with voting organizations. The BOS also operates a PWLE Working Group, in addition to the quarterly company meeting. Travis Poulin said he agrees the Steering Committee meeting is not structured to be inviting to PWLE. He mentioned the CCHA often hears complaints from PWLE that the meeting is not inviting, and they often don't understand the discussions. He is not concerned about the filtering of opinions from PWLE in the working group. He is concerned with the participation definition; some people have entered the meeting late, not spoken, and still received stipends for "participation".

Ari mentioned a smaller group discussion space may be ideal for creating an inviting atmosphere for PWLE. Ideally, a facilitator would only try to pull information out of the group and not add expertise or perspective. Amy mentioned the benefits of hosting the quarterly meeting option at a different location could be intentionally more inviting.

Nicole Kubon mentioned Steps to End Domestic Violence (STEPS) has formed an advisory Board that offers insider perspectives about how to improve the organization. This type of group would be used to help identify barriers to service within the CCHA membership network. Nicole mentioned this could be the best venue to offer participation stipends. This could be an opportunity for leadership within the local PWLE community (I.e. Advisory Chairs).

Justin Graham would like to see a more dedicated space to hear from PWLE. He is not a fan of the Steering Committee meetings as they are structured now. He wants to encourage avoiding too much structure in the process of facilitating conversation with PWLE; we want the group to be part of its own forming. The people in the group may be good advocates to communicate information to the wider community.

Bryce Bierman proposed the idea of taking this community conversation, and its recommendations, to the Executive Committee for consideration for change.

Justin would like to create measures of progress for the PWLE working group to help discern the return on the time. This policy would also help reinforce the idea of their voice making a difference within policy decisions.

3. Safety in the CCHA

15 minutes

Nicole mentioned it is important that the CCHA creates a safety plan for our committee meetings that meet in person. She wants to create a plan before we need it. She would like to discuss a plan with the Committee that could be passed up to the Executive Committee for consideration. Ari said it would be good to know what the City of Burlington has for the Contois Auditorium space. This may shed light on any existing plans. Bryce will identify the safety protocols already in place for Contois Auditorium.

Nicole said she would like to create a checklist to go through safety questions when planning in-person meetings in the CCHA. She asked “how can we make the space inviting and engaging? Who is available to provide more support away from the meeting discussion? Do we have signs on the doors that say not to carry weapons into the space? Does City Hall?”

Mike McCarthy asked if any of our committee members who are directly involved in the service provision could provide some kind of template for a safety plan. Nicole and Travis mentioned they have plans they are willing to share and that they are always changing their policies to meet needs.

Amy said it is important to create a safety plan; she wants to focus on how we function as an Alliance, which differentiates from the safety plans used by member organizations.

Nicole suggested we pass a draft idea to the Executive Committee for consideration. Ari supports that idea.

Justin mentioned it may be good to provide annual training for de-escalation to the CCHA membership.

Mike suggested even including a note about de-escalation at the beginning of every in-person CCHA meeting.

Nicole wants to prevent members of the CCHA pulling back their participation because they do not feel safe at the gathering space.

Bryce will talk to the Membership and Outreach Committee to schedule regular de-escalation training seminars for the CCHA.

4. Annual Retreat Planning

15 minutes

Travis said he prefers to plan the meeting for the end of summer since the organizations are so busy right now recovering from the winter services.

Nicole mentioned late summer is a good timing for her and Steps for Ending Domestic Violence.

Ari supports the idea of hosting the annual retreat in late summer.

Amy mentioned the week that school starts is a difficult time for planning for anyone who may have kids.

Nicole suggested surveying the Committee Co-Chairs to see what dates work best in August.

Amy suggested the last two weeks of summer, then the first two weeks of September.

Bryce will send a survey after the topic is brought up at the CCHA quarterly co-chairs meeting in April.

5. Drafting Committee Workplan

20 minutes

Amy has pulled the main priorities for the year into the draft workplan for the Committee. See the report [HERE](#).

Bryce suggested reviewing the workplan at the beginning of each Committee meeting to help the Committee stay on track. The Co-Chairs will also review the plan during Committee agenda planning meetings.

Ari thought it was helpful to have a smaller planning team for the retreat. The smaller group should be made up of the facilitators for the events and some administrative support. Nicole supports this type of approach.

Ari said it would be good to gather retreat feedback immediately after the retreat. The longer we wait the less people will remember.

Ari mentioned it will be important to understand how our committees are using data to make decisions. Nicole said it would be best to understand what the Committees are doing before we try to understand the data that support their decisions. Bryce supported the idea of gathering information on what each Committee is doing before inquiring about data resources; this could be done at the quarterly CCHA co-chairs meeting.

Ari posed the question of whether we should be inviting co-chairs to present to the SPC, or if we should send members to their meetings. She feels inviting co-chairs to our meeting may be a more sensitive approach. Taylor emphasized the HOP presentation sign-up sheet as an example that could be used to ask co-chairs to present to SPC on their own time.

Nicole suggested providing more individualized support this year, then next year more tasks will have been accomplished to report back on.

Taylor suggested posing the questions to the co-chairs ahead of time, but we will work on gathering feedback next year.

Ari said we want to be sensitive to the Committee co-chairs, so they feel they appreciate the meetings, rather than being anxious about them. We want them to feel successful, not like a failure.

6. *Other Business*

10 minutes

Meeting adjourned at 12:32pm