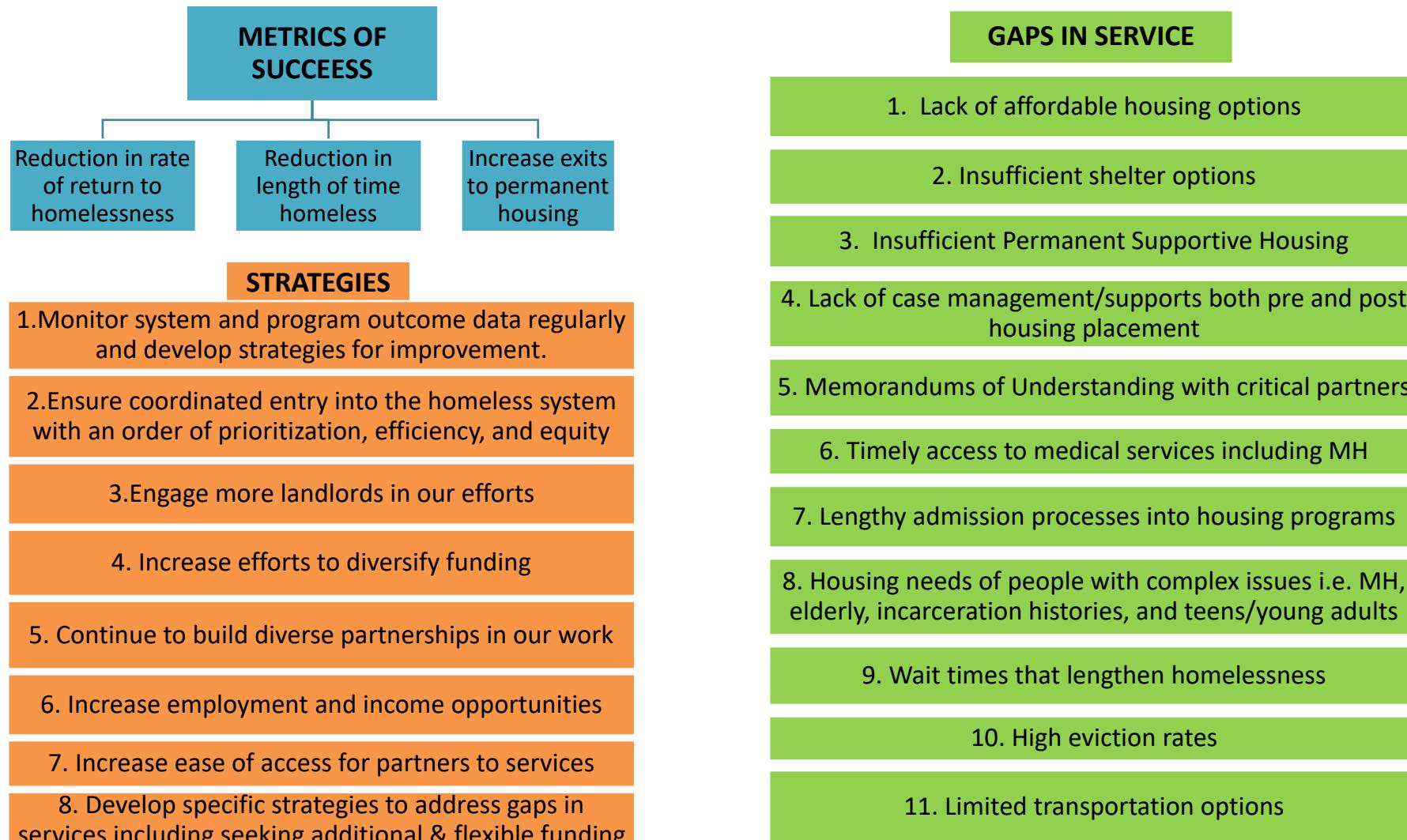


PA-603 Continuum of Care Strategic Plan to End Homelessness In Beaver County, PA

The PA-603 Continuum of Care is committed to the goal of ending homelessness in Beaver County by operating a system of partners that quickly identifies, engages, and rehouses households who face a housing crisis. The Steering Committee and Collaborative Applicant will use this tool in addition to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action plans to guide their decision making over the course of the next 3 years (2025-2028). It will be updated as determined necessary by data and outcomes.



PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOL

The Strategic Planning Tool is meant to be used as a reference to guide planning efforts and to help make funding decisions. It is used by the CoC Governing Board, the CoC Coordinator, and the Collaborative Applicant. Entities who apply for some homeless funds are asked to structure their proposals around the needs identified in this document. The Governing Board reviews the Strategic Planning Tool annually and formally updates it every 3 years. Input is gathered from CoC and ESG funded programs, the Housing & Homeless Coalition members, the Lived Homeless Expertise committee, and through the Gaps Analysis Survey. The CoC Coordinator also provides data to inform the process.

CONTEXT OF HOMELESSNESS IN BEAVER COUNTY

PA-603 CoC is made up of partners working in coordination with various housing programs to end homelessness in Beaver County. Ending homelessness means the experience of homelessness is a rare occurrence and when it does occur it is brief and non-recurring. The Housing & Homeless Coalition is comprised of 296 distinct service and resource partners and advocates. Of these partners approximately 50 regularly attend monthly partner meetings. 16 different programs provide housing to homeless people and include: 3 Permanent Supportive Housing programs, 1 Transitional Housing program, 6 Rapid Rehousing programs, and 6 Emergency Shelters. These housing programs provide 361 beds for people who are homeless (2025 HIC). On the night of January 27, 2025, 97% of those beds were filled (350 people). This represents a decrease from last year and it slightly exceeds the pre-pandemic levels of 330 people reported on the 2020 HIC. Numbers peaked at 444 people during the height of the pandemic in 2021 as reported on that year's HIC so the 2025 HIC still demonstrates a decrease from that peak. Despite a significant increase in the average length of time homeless in FY 2023, FY 2024 decreased by 33 days (FY 2023 and 2024 System Performance Measures). This is surprising given the continuing tight affordable housing market, reduction of Housing Choice Vouchers, lack of available Mainstream Vouchers, and the Housing Authority regularly being at full capacity. In fact, in 2023 the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania estimated that Beaver County only has 68 affordable housing units for every 100 extremely low-income households. Further analysis is needed to understand how the reduction in length of time homeless occurred in this tight market.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

The PA-603 CoC has a wealth of data to determine progress toward the goal of ending homelessness in Beaver County. The Governing Board has adopted the three metrics indicated on the Tool to determine progress toward meeting that goal. These metrics further guide the CoC's planning efforts and the development of strategies to improve performance and overall progress toward the goal. The chart below demonstrates these outcomes over the last five years (2020-2025 System Performance Measures reports).

Metric of Success	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Avg length of time homeless for ES	77 days	60 days	66 days	104 days	73 days
Avg length of time homeless for ES and TH	125 days	74 days	70 days	111 days	82 days
Exits to PH from ES, TH, RRH	49% (347 people)	48% (380 people)	51% (395 people)	60% (290 people)	53% (255)

Exits to PH or maintenance of PH from PSH	95% (231 people)	98% (196 people)	91% (197 people)	92% (177 people)	91% (183)
Returns to Homelessness	16% (68 people)	16% (70 people)	15% (64 people)	11% (58 people)	7.7% (38)

ANALYSIS OF METRICS OF SUCCESS

Comparing FY 2024 to FY 2020, PA-603 CoC has decreased the average length of time homeless by 4 days for ES and decreased it by 43 days for ES & TH combined. These decreases could be explained by the Men's Emergency Shelter efficiently moving people into PH. Exits to PH from ES, TH, and RRH increased by 4% since 2020 but decreased from FY 2023 by 7%. Exits to PH (or maintenance of PH) from PSH decreased by 4% from 2020 to 2024 and they decreased by 1% from last year. It should be noted that 2021 has a very high exit rate to PH likely due to the introduction of Mainstream Vouchers which the Housing Authority prioritized for households exiting PSH and RRH. The metric of exits to PH needs further analysis to develop strategies to reverse the decrease of the last year.

Returns to homelessness showed significant improvement from FY 2020 with an 8.3% decrease and a 3.3% decrease from last year. This could potentially still be attributed to the massive influx of homeless prevention funds into the County during the pandemic and the programs' efforts to exit people to more stable housing situations.

STRATEGIES

The Strategies identified on the Strategic Planning Tool will advance the goal of ending homelessness as described below. The numbers correspond with the strategies numbered above.

1. Monitoring data enables the CoC to gauge its progress toward the goal of ending homelessness. The CoC identified the need to develop a formal process for further data analysis and for developing strategies to enhance this progress. Therefore, Data Quality and Outcomes subcommittees were created in the last year. These committees will develop strategies to improve both overall Data Quality and system and program outcomes.
2. Coordinated Entry helps ensure efficient and effective service delivery to all homeless households. Coordinated Entry (CE) implemented the referral system through HMIS thereby expediting access to the housing programs. The CoC updated the CE tool to reflect changing needs and to be more inclusive and respectful. The Lived Homeless Expertise committee provided valuable insight into this effort. The CE tool is in the testing stages to be embedded into the HMIS system thereby streamlining the data collection and HUD reporting. The CE committee meets monthly to ensure efficient referrals and placement and to monitor changing needs, system inefficiencies, etc. The aim of these efforts is to continually improve the efficiency of client referral and housing.
3. Landlords are a critical partner in quickly housing homeless households and for providing PH options both during program enrollment and upon exit. Although our programs tend to have strong partnerships with many landlords, the CoC does not have a formal process to recognize those efforts. Further, there is very limited landlord representation on the Housing & Homeless Coalition. Currently one landlord regularly attends the

monthly Coalition meeting and she is also an active member of ACRE (the local landlord association). In the last year, she has invited several partners to the ACRE meeting to discuss their programs. A few new partnerships came out of those meetings. However, programs are reporting increased landlord frustration with partnering with the CoC for a variety of reasons (limits on raising the rents, perceived increased risk of damages etc). Therefore landlord engagement will continue to require attention going forward. Developing a dedicated position for engaging landlords, increasing mitigation funds, and embedding appreciation efforts into our strategies could be beneficial.

4. Diversifying funding is a best practice for ensuring stability in programs. The CoC partners are heavily funded by HUD which could be facing significant cuts in the coming year. For this reason, working to increase funding sources could offer some valuable protection to the programs. These alternative sources could include: grants (use of the Non-Profit Center through the Beaver County Library System could be effective), foundations, private donors, fee for service models (as appropriate), etc.

5. The CoC recognizes that no two homeless situations are the same; therefore, households benefit from different combinations of supports and services to resolve their unique housing crises. To do this, we need broad partnerships of diverse services and resources, and across sectors. We currently have 314 entities represented in our Housing & Homeless Coalition with approximately 50 who regularly attend the monthly partner meeting. This is an increase of 18 entities from the last update of this document. We are always inviting new partners into the work. And current partners are encouraged to invite new people as well. Since they are out navigating the resources, they often encounter new people who could play a stabilizing role in homeless situations. This enables the CoC to grow its membership every year and continue to offer the unique complement of services from which a household facing a housing crisis may benefit.

6. The CoC recognizes stable income as a significant factor in achieving long-term housing stability. CoC partners do coordinate with job training and education resources and they have grown these partnerships over the last year. The housing programs also screen households for other sources of income for which they may be eligible, and they work to connect the households with these resources. Our CoC funded programs increased total income by 5% for stayers in the last year (FY 2024 System Performance Measures). These same programs saw a 2% decrease in income for households who left the program during the last year (FY 2024 System Performance Measures). Leavers do not always leave with a plan for stability or progress toward their plan for stability. This may mean that they left before they had the opportunity to increase their income. This issue will continue to be addressed by the programs and the CoC will continue to attempt to pull in partners to assist.

7. The Systems Gaps Analysis indicated that partners experience some difficulty accessing Outreach, Shelter, Coordinated Entry, and Prevention programs. It is unclear whether this is because the services are difficult to access or if there just is not enough of the services to meet the needs. Further analysis is needed.

8. The Systems Gaps Analysis identified several gaps in vital services. These include: limited shelter options, limited transportation options, limited access to timely mental health services, long wait times for affordable housing, and lack of affordable housing. The System Gaps Analysis also revealed that partners found accessing these programs to be a little difficult: Outreach, shelter, Coordinated Entry, and Prevention programs. The CoC is committed to developing strategies and funding to address these gaps and difficulties. Requests for Proposals for homeless funds include the Strategic Plan and require that proposals address it. This ensures that new funding is being directed at the identified gaps. Further strategies

include identifying relevant partners and experts to address the gaps, considering reallocation of funds as needs change, securing new funds, securing flexible funds, and learning best practices for addressing the gaps.

GAPS IN SERVICE

The Systems Gaps Analysis, CoC Coordination team, CoC partners, and the Governing Board identified these 12 gaps in services as having a negative impact on ending homelessness in Beaver County. Each is detailed below according to the number of the gap as listed on page 1.

1. Beaver County only has 68 affordable housing units for every 100 extremely low-income households. This shortage impacts how long homeless households remain homeless while looking for housing. It also lengthens the time in a program while a household looks for affordable housing when ready for exit. In fact the rate of exits to PH decreased by 7% (2024 Sys PM) which occurred after an 8% increase the year before. And finally, as a household may need to move or is evicted, the lack of affordable housing makes it more likely that the household will become homeless again.
2. The Systems Gaps Analysis identified shelter options as limited. Currently the CoC has a Men's Shelter, Women's Shelter, 2 shelter options for families with Child Welfare involvement, an small apartment shelter program, and hotels as needed. There is not a dedicated family shelter (for families without Child Welfare involvement) nor are there shelter or housing options for youth. Although the CoC strives to provide access to permanent housing as efficiently as possible, shelter options remain a vital resource for households to: rest, begin gathering important documents, securing income (through employment or benefits), access needed medical care etc. Although no household is expected to accomplish all of these tasks while in shelter, emergency shelter does provide the space, resources, and support to begin many of these critical tasks while providing for basic human needs, protection from the elements, and safety.
3. Over the last year, our PSH programs (in total 3 programs comprised of 160 beds) were primarily at full capacity. This led to significantly longer wait times and households being placed in available programs that did not best meet their needs. It has also placed increased demand on the RRH programs. In the last year, these programs have been so full that for the first time since the advent of Coordinated Entry (2017) not all households are receiving immediate referrals due to no openings. These households will be referred as the programs indicated openings but this is a significant shift for the CoC. Additionally, The System Gaps Analysis identified Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing as the top two greatest needed housing program types.
4. Partners have identified the need for more case management support after a homeless household is housed. The CoC recognizes that challenges to housing do not disappear with housing alone. For long term housing stability ongoing case management support is increasingly needed – even if only as a safety net to prevent returns to homelessness. Partners have also highlighted the need for case management for people without behavioral health challenges as this population is often not eligible for traditional case management services.
5. PA-603 is a stand alone CoC within the geographical boundaries of Beaver County, PA. Beaver County is a small county where many partners have worked on the issue of homelessness for extended periods of time. This means that partnering is often seamless and non-contractual.

However, CoC partners recognize the value in formalizing these partnerships so that consistent service is rendered. There is also value in being able to point to these formal partnerships when applying for funding and when demonstrating the cohesion within our CoC partnerships. Examples include, MOUs, specific agreements to render services to a programs housing clients, tracking services rendered to housing clients and using that as leverage, sitting on partner agencies boards or subcommittees, formally collaborating on a joint project, etc.

6. Unhoused people often face complicated medical and behavioral health challenges. However, they often have difficulty accessing much needed medical care outside of emergency settings. This delay can result in conditions becoming chronic (and therefore more difficult to treat) and increased vulnerability due to weakened immunity. Furthermore, the PSH programs require that eligible households have a documented disability. With complicated access to medical care, this lack of documentation often delays their housing. A dedicated medical mobile outreach team could bring critical care directly to people where they are and streamline the documentation process to establish PSH eligibility. Progress has been made in closing this gap with one shelter provider partnering with a mobile medical provider to visit the site on a regular basis.

7. The Systems Gap Analysis identified long waits for affordable housing as a barrier to ending homelessness. Also our Lived Expertise Group shared that programs with lengthy admission processes can often lead to households disregarding those housing options. Although the limited supply of affordable housing plays a significant role in these long waits, CoC partners are also encouraged to review their processes to ensure the most efficient and streamlined enrollment procedures.

8. CoC partners report households are presenting with increasingly complex situations – such households include teen/young adult, previously incarcerated, elderly, and/or those with mental illness. Children under 18 years of age do not have the option for emancipation in Beaver County. This means that unaccompanied children are still viewed as part of a family unit by our Child Welfare partner. Landlords are not likely to rent to persons under the age of 18. And those aged 18-21 often struggle with maintaining independent living initially. We work to address this with supportive services, but programs tailored to meet the needs of unaccompanied children and young adults are needed to better meet their unique needs. The CoC team and the Child Welfare partner recently developed a Youth Advisory Board to help guide these efforts.

People leaving jail face many challenges to secure housing including a criminal history that often serves as a barrier to housing. We currently have an agency who connects with people in jail who are readying for release. This enables the incarcerated person to start working on housing before they are out in the community with no money and limited supports. This population could benefit from expanding this program and/or developing additional programs similar to it.

Elderly households face many challenges to secure housing including but not limited to low incomes and the need for in-home supports to live safely and healthfully. Partnering with our Office on Aging and other elderly focused service partners enables the CoC to bring specialized supports to these households but there continues to be a gap for those elderly adults with complex medical and behavioral health needs.

Our CoC continues to struggle with a small segment of the population who does not meet the criteria for institutional residential settings but who face many emotional and behavioral challenges to living safely, healthfully, and independently in the community. The CoC works very closely with Beaver County Behavioral Health and numerous other behavioral health treatment providers, but stably housing households with complex behavioral health needs remains a very real challenge in the CoC. Landlords are hesitant to rent to people who they think may cause damage

and/or disruption. Histories of evictions make finding a landlord to partner with even more challenging. In addition to the challenges of securing appropriately supported housing for people with emotional and behavioral challenges, securing shelter is also a challenge. Some people are uncomfortable in congregate settings, while others need more support than a hotel alone can offer. Again, the CoC continually strives to enhance services and supports for people with these challenges, but their movement through the CoC programs remains complex – lengthening their time homeless, and in some cases adding to their poor rental histories. Recently, two new behavioral health professionals joined the Housing & Homeless Coalition, and one partners with one of our housing agencies. These recent developments are promising.

People face homelessness for a vast variety of reasons making their situations complex in unique ways. However, the majority of the funding CoC partners receive to provide housing are highly regulated and for very specific costs. These funds make it difficult to meet the complex and unique circumstances of every unhoused household. Continuing to grow our partnerships can help meet these needs as can securing flexible sources of funding.

9. Many factors impact the length of time a household remains homeless - limited affordable housing options, insufficient case management support, insufficient PH supply, inconsistent coordination between partners etc. Lack of affordable housing continues to impact the length of time homelessness in two ways. The first way is the length of time it takes the program to find affordable housing for the household. The second way is upon exit when the household seeks affordable housing to which they will exit. Long lengths of homelessness not only increase the negative consequences that households experience, but it also causes the homeless system to “back up”. When the programs have limited housing capacity because households are unable to move on, then the currently waiting homeless people remain unsheltered or in emergency shelter for longer periods of time which is not a best practice. Expanding affordable housing as well as the capacity of the permanent housing programs would help shorten this length of time. The goal of the CoC is to make homelessness a rare and BRIEF experience when it happens. In fact, the length of time homeless is one of the Metrics of Success in this report. The CoC did shorten the length of time homeless in 2024 by 29 days from 2023. This was after a significant increase in the measure from 2022 to 2023. Further analysis is needed to understand what contributed to this improvement.

10. An analysis conducted by the Housing Alliance of PA compared eviction rates prior to the pandemic (2018-2019) to those after the pandemic (2022-2023). Beaver County’s post pandemic eviction rates both exceed pre-pandemic levels as well as the 2022-2023 State eviction rate. Beaver County is one of 16 counties in the State that exceed the state average. It should be noted that the Emergency Rental Assistance Program which was in operation throughout the pandemic closed in June 2024. Without alternative interventions in place (i.e. increase in homeless prevention funds, increase in rental assistance for eviction prevention, mediation, coordination with the local magistrates etc), the CoC did see an increase in homelessness. Between the 2023 and 2024 Longitudinal System Analysis, Beaver County had a 24% increase in homelessness. It is likely that the loss of ERAP at the midpoint of 2024 had an influence on this outcome. In the last year, the CoC has partnered with the Housing Alliance of PA to work on strategies to reduce our higher than State average eviction rate. To date, this work has included: advocacy efforts to establish a stable State funded eviction prevention program, and the beginning stages of coordinating the first ever Eviction Prevention Incubator meeting. This meeting will bring together a broad range of stakeholders to envision an efficient and effective eviction prevention strategy. The broad representation at the meeting will help ensure the strategy benefits households at risk of evictions, landlords facing lost income and costs as a

results of eviction, and courts that are burdened with a high rate of eviction cases. The State funding coupled with a solid eviction strategy could have an impact effect on the County's high eviction rates.

11. Transportation was a leading explanation given in the 2025 Gaps Analysis Survey as a barrier for people experiencing homelessness. Public transportation has limited hours and destinations. This is challenging for people residing in places where the bus does not travel and for people who need transport outside of public transport hours (i.e. for employment). Further some people experiencing homelessness do have vehicles but they often do not have funds to maintain or fuel the vehicle. Also, some households do not have funds for the required vehicle inspections which could lead to a summary offence – further adding to the household's barriers. Beaver County has limited areas that are walkable or that have bike lanes so even those modes of transportation are limited in the County. A suggestion was made in response to the Gaps Analysis Survey that we invite the Beaver County Transit Authority to one of our Coalition meetings to discuss their various programs and the unique transit challenges that people experiencing homelessness face. The CoC Coordinator will extend an invite to BCTA to attend our Coalition meetings.

CONCLUSION

The Strategic Plan is meant to guide the CoC's efforts toward the goal of ending homelessness in Beaver County. It identifies the measures that are used to gauge progress toward that goal and provides data to demonstrate that progress. It explores gaps in services that slow that progress, and it outlines strategies to fill those gaps. The Strategic Plan is formally updated every 3 years by the Governing Board and reviewed annually (by the Governing Board, the Housing & Homeless Coalition, the CoC Coordination team, and the Lived Homeless Expert committee) and updated as needed. The CoC Coordinator amasses input from partners throughout the year and pulls data to further inform the process for updating the plan. Additionally, data from the following sources are used throughout the report: 2025 Gaps Analysis Survey, 2025 Point in Time report, 2025 Housing Inventory Chart, and the 2024 Longitudinal Systems Analysis. Anyone with input or questions on the Strategic Plan may reach out at any time to the CoC Coordinator, Dina Ciabattoni, at ciabattonidina@gmail.com or 724.987.0714.