

## **Purpose and Need for a Systems Analysis in Clark County, WA**

Clark County, like many communities across the U.S., is experiencing a persistent and increasingly complex homelessness crisis. Despite significant investments and coordinated efforts across the local Homeless Crisis Response System, the growth in homelessness, especially among people living unsheltered, continues to generate concern among residents, providers, and local governments.

The County's Homeless Action Plan (HAP), required under RCW 43.185C.050, focuses on a defined set of interventions: outreach, shelter, prevention/diversion, coordinated entry, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. While this response system plays a vital role in addressing community homelessness, it is only one part of a much larger web of systems that influence who becomes homeless, who remains unhoused, and how people exit homelessness.

To meaningfully reduce and ultimately end homelessness, we must move beyond program-specific solutions and examine the broader ecosystem of contributing systems to help prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. This includes, but is not limited to: behavioral health, physical healthcare, housing development and land use, education, child welfare, employment and workforce, criminal justice, public policy, and local ordinances. These systems shape both the root causes of homelessness and the community's ability to prevent and resolve it.

Any solutions must also be informed by the people most impacted—those with lived experience of homelessness, who understand first-hand how these systems succeed or fail.

### **Why a Broader Analysis is Needed**

Homelessness does not arise solely from gaps in homeless-specific services. It is deeply shaped by how other systems, including many outside the scope of the Homeless Action Plan, function, or fail, people experiencing poverty, trauma, behavioral health needs, and systemic exclusion. The Homeless Action Plan is an essential component of the community's response. The community's response can be strengthened by examining the full range of systems that impact homelessness and identify opportunities for strategic alignment across sectors.

To effectively reduce homelessness and build a more resilient, inclusive, and humane community response, we need a comprehensive, cross-sector analysis that examines:

- The predisposing factors that increase someone's risk of homelessness (e.g., poverty, eviction, lack of access to behavioral healthcare, structural racism)
- The precipitating factors that push people into crisis (e.g., domestic violence, job loss, discharge from jail, untreated illness)

- The perpetuating factors that keep people stuck without access to meaningful, lasting solutions

This analysis can guide stakeholders - jurisdictions, agencies, providers, and funders - in finding alignment around strategy, policy, execution, and defining and tracking success. Finding alignment will maximize the impact of investments and system changes to best support restoring stability to individuals in crisis.

## **Core Objectives of the Systems Analysis**

This effort is not just about evaluating programs. It's about understanding how people fall through the cracks and identifying what systemic change is needed to prevent that. The analysis will:

- Map the broader homelessness ecosystem: who is impacted, which systems are involved, and how they interact
- Evaluate the performance, alignment, and gaps within the Homeless Crisis Response System and its connection points to other systems
- Identify systemic and philosophical misalignments that may be impeding progress (e.g., how Housing First, low-barrier, or other supportive services are practiced vs. intended)
- Examine outcomes for the most vulnerable individuals, including those not successfully housed or engaged in services
- Assess equity and disproportionality, especially for BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, veterans, older adults, and justice-involved individuals
- Provide cross-sector recommendations that integrate prevention, care coordination, and long-term stabilization
- Suggest governance and funding realignments to reduce fragmentation and promote shared accountability
- Ensure that the voices, leadership, and insights of people with lived experience are meaningfully incorporated throughout the analysis—not just as informants, but as co-creators of systems change
- Explore opportunities for greater private sector, philanthropic, and community involvement in addressing homelessness systemically. Opportunities to be explored include investments in innovation, flexible support models, and prevention strategies outside of government funding streams.
- Review how data is capture and analyzed to address inadequacies and support improvements to data systems

## **Specific Deliverables Will Include**

- A cross-sector landscape assessment of who experiences homelessness in Clark County and why

- A systems mapping and gap analysis, including strengths, under-resourced areas, and disconnected partners
- A detailed evaluation of the local Housing First approach, including outcomes, implementation fidelity, and alternative or complementary models
- Benchmarks, technical assistance needs, and implementation pathways that local governments and providers can adopt
- A governance review to inform regional alignment and decision-making structures
- Recommendations for engaging and mobilizing non-traditional partners, such as philanthropy, business, civic organizations, and special government districts, to play a more strategic role in prevention and long-term system transformation
- A lived experience inclusion plan to ensure that system reform efforts continue to reflect the expertise of those most impacted
- A framework for ensuring the ecosystem can evolve, adapt, and remain effective over time, capable of responding to future challenges.

## **Why It Matters**

This analysis is not just about what we're doing. It's about why it's not working well enough, and how we can change that together. It recognizes that real solutions require cross-system collaboration, shared responsibility, and a willingness to challenge the status quo.

It acknowledges that people are suffering right now, and any system that leaves people without safety, dignity, or support while waiting for "permanent housing" is failing. A resilient and humane system must do both — respond to crisis with urgency and build toward long-term, structural change.

It also acknowledges that real system change cannot happen without the leadership of those who have been most harmed by current systems, nor without broad community participation, including the private sector and philanthropic partners.

By investing in a comprehensive systems analysis, Clark County and its city partners can build a common foundation, grounded in data, inclusive of diverse perspectives, and focused on long-term outcomes, to guide decisions that will effectively reduce and prevent homelessness in our region.