

Implementing a Unified Regional Approach to Ending Homelessness in Pierce County, Washington



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Why a Unified Regional Approach?

On March 15, 2022, the Pierce County Council adopted its [Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness](#). The first goal of the plan reads:

“Create a unified homeless response system, including a unified regional approach with central decision-making authority of funding and services.”

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Vision of the Comprehensive Plan

"Our vision is an integrated, adaptable, and responsive network of services that supports restoration, stability, and self-determination for everyone—regardless of economic or social circumstances, and regardless of where in our community they live."

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Values: Seven values are defined and discussed in the plan:

1. Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion
2. Targeted Universalism
3. Centering Lived Experience
4. Community Engaged
5. Geographic Equity
6. Integrated, Adaptable, Responsive
7. Collaborative and Accountable

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What's at stake right now?

1. Scale and scope of suffering
2. Impacts on public systems
3. Economic recovery and vitality
4. Community confidence

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What can be accomplished with a URA?



- ✓ Fundraising and Revenue Maximization
- ✓ Improvements to Procurement and Contract Monitoring



- ✓ Improvements to Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting
- ✓ Planning and Coordination



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Foundational findings

A Unified Regional Approach is necessary and next:

- The scale and scope of the challenge—and the success of the CPEH and related plans—require additional, structured collaboration
- Current impacts of the crisis are obscured by fragmentation
- There are significant administrative and cost efficiencies that can be achieved through a URA
- There are significant existing community capacities that can be better leveraged and aligned
- There are opportunities for early success

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Overarching success factors

1. Political will and urgency
2. Mechanisms to advance racial equity
3. Mechanisms to increase alignment
4. Significant capacity
5. Appropriate timelines
6. Robust community engagement

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A successful URA will:

1. Have authority and credibility
2. Be accountable to all stakeholders
3. Increase available resources
4. Accurately assess and address gaps
5. Improve operational coordination
6. Build bridges between jurisdictions and systems

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THREE OPTIONS for Advancing a URA:

1. Invest in building capacity in existing structures.
2. Establish an MOU with specific, time-limited objectives and commitments.
3. Establish an interlocal agreement under RCW 39.34.030.

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OPTION 1: Invest in building capacity in existing structures

ADVANTAGES:

1. Recognizes additional potential in the existing collaborative structures
2. Can be expeditiously negotiated and advanced by agency leadership
3. May require less immediate additional investment

CHALLENGES:

1. Limited ability to advance systems-level improvements
2. Limited ability to achieve administrative efficiencies
3. Limited accountability for realizing positive changes

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Examples: Capacity Building Initiatives

- Dayton, OH and Dayton-Kettering-Montgomery OH CoC
 - Standardized assessment & Coordinated Entry
 - Funding alignment
 - Evaluation
- Philadelphia, PA CoC
 - Data sharing
 - Planning and coordinating prevention programs

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OPTION 2: Establish an MOU with specific, time-limited objectives and commitments.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Provides clarity and specificity regarding shared goals and strategies
2. Establishes new formal commitments
3. Improves understanding of the agreements and resources necessary for URA
4. Requires less negotiation than an interlocal agreement

CHALLENGES:

1. Powers and authority under an MOU are limited by law
2. Would not allow for unified administration of funding, unified procurement, and contract management, as called for in the Plan
3. Limited ability to achieve administrative efficiencies

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Examples: MOUs

- King County & Seattle, prior to the URA
- Snohomish County & Everett, prior to the URA
 - Planning the URA
- Placer County California
 - Data sharing
 - Regional planning

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OPTION 3: Establish an interlocal agreement under RCW 39.34.030.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Meets the vision of the Plan
2. Consolidates and can improve planning and decision-making
3. Provides a high level of accountability to elected officials & community
4. Can achieve administrative efficiencies
5. Can further operationalize commitments to diversity, equity, lived experience

CHALLENGES:

1. Requires significant, sustained political will and alignment
2. Would require adaptation by participating jurisdictions and engaged stakeholders
3. Requires time and investment to build capacity

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Examples: Interlocal Agreement

- [King County, WA](#)
 - Created a new, “separate administrative government agency”
 - Unified planning, procurement, oversight
- [Austin, TX](#)
 - Created a dedicated nonprofit organization (ECHO)
 - Contiguous with the Continuum of Care

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Phasing Options

1. Establish an MOU to commit to the negotiation of an interlocal agreement.
2. Craft an interlocal agreement that phases in responsibilities over time.

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Q&A



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