

# UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

Presentation for the  
**City of Tacoma**  
**Community Vitality and Safety Committee**

September 25, 2025

uncommon bridges

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## URA: How we got here ...

UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH  
TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

- **2020:** Pierce County's *Five-Year Plan to End Homelessness (2020-2025)* — adopted ✓
- **2022:** *Comprehensive Plan to End Homelessness* — approved ✓
  - Goal 1: Create a Unified Homeless System
  - *Homeless Services Assessment* — ECONorthwest
  - *Case Studies on other Unified Regional Approaches* — Social Change Partners, LLC
- **2023 – 24:** Unified Regional Approach **momentum stalled** due in part to political division
- **April 2024:** **Convening revived** interest in a Unified Regional Approach — CM Hitchen + 13 jurisdictions
- **10/24 – 12/26:** **Unified Regional Approach to Homelessness in Pierce County**  
Scope, Design, & Implement a Unified Regional Approach to Homelessness

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## About Us





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## Uncommon Bridges Role

**UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH**  
TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

- Outreach & Engagement**  
Elected officials, government staff, service providers, lived experience experts
- Research & best practices**  
Regional unified approaches
- Facilitation & consensus**  
Agreement on a more unified regional approach
- Design & implementation support**  
Launching a more unified regional approach



Individual  
Engagement  
+  
Group  
Facilitation

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**Project Purpose** **UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH**  
TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

To have Pierce County governments agree on and launch a more unified response to homelessness across Pierce County.

*This is not a study.  
It's making a deal and getting started.*

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**Project Structure** **UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH**  
TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

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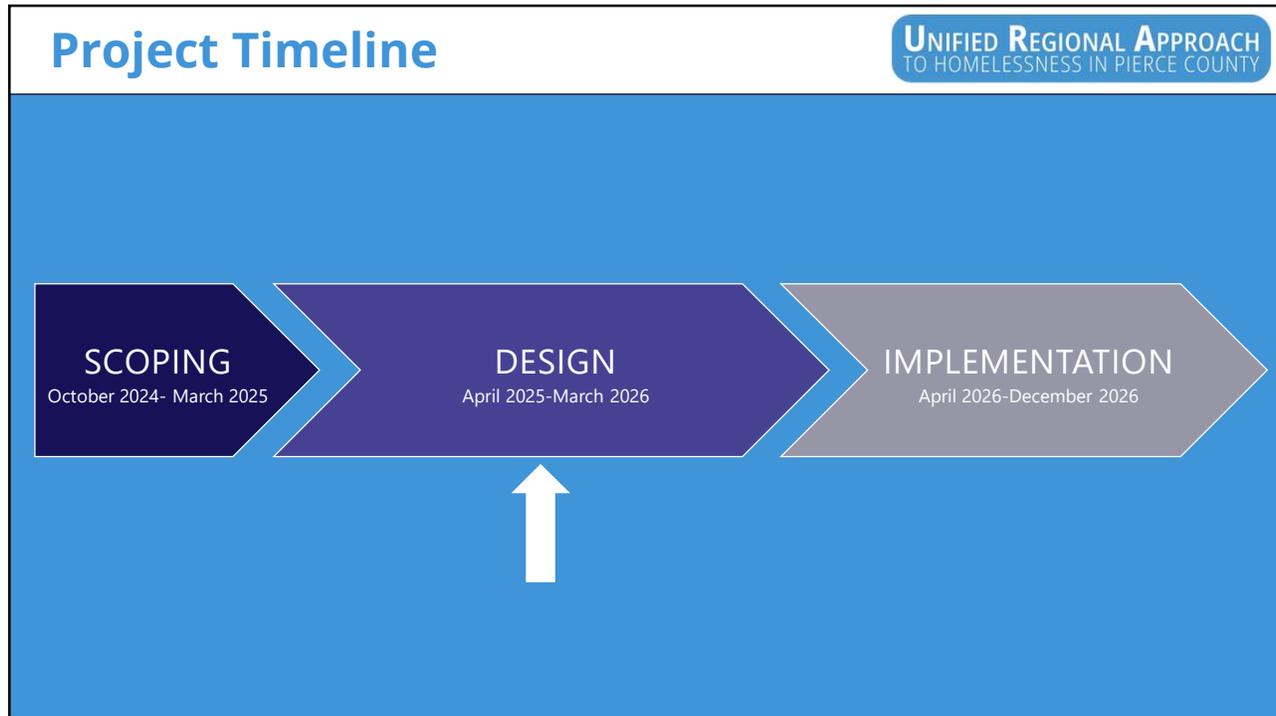
graph TD
    A[ELECTED LEADERSHIP GROUP] --- B[STAFF PLANNING GROUP]
    B --- C[GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE]
    B --- D[FINANCE TASK FORCE]
    B --- E[OPERATIONS TASK FORCE]
    C --- F[Stakeholder Engagement]
    D --- F
    E --- F
    subgraph F [STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT]
        F1[Lived Experience]
        F2[Service Providers]
        F3[Neighborhoods]
        F4[Community Orgs.]
        F5[Healthcare]
        F6[Workforce]
        F7[Government Staff]
        F8[Elected Officials]
        F9[Faith Communities]
        F10[Public Safety]
        F11[Behavioral Health]
        F12[Philanthropy]
    end
  
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----- STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT -----

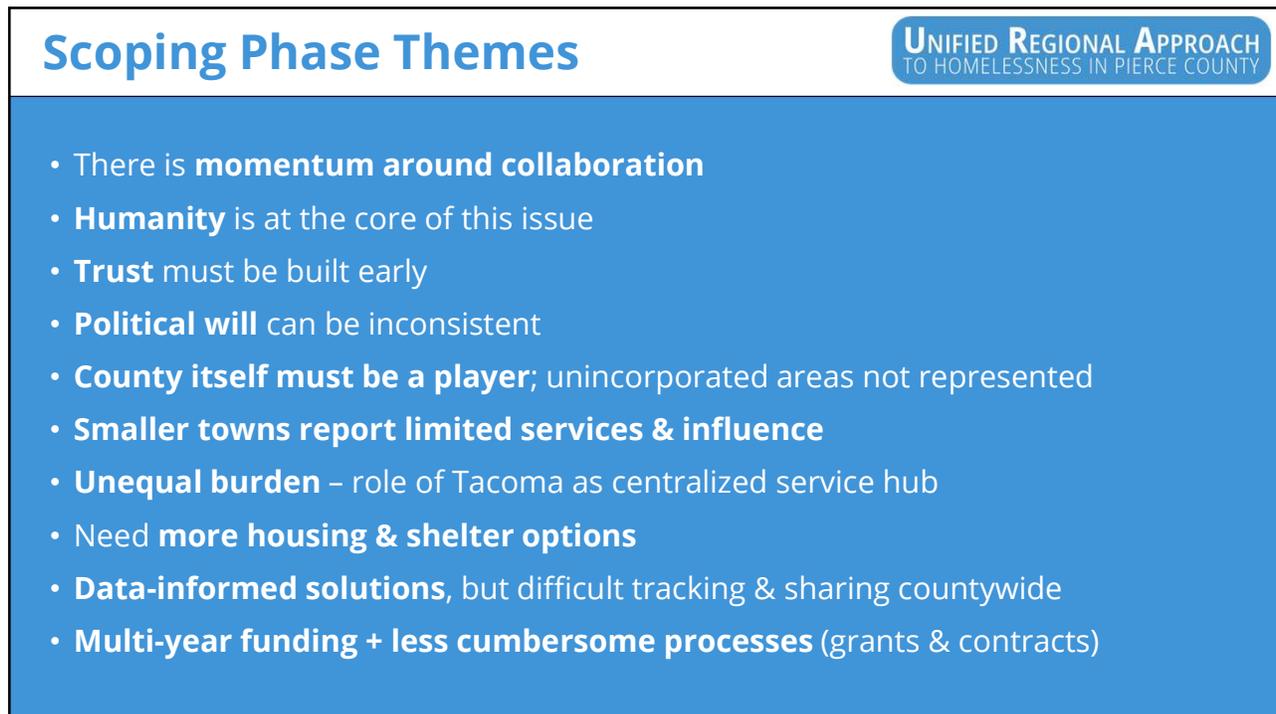
Lived Experience   Service Providers   Neighborhoods   Community Orgs.   Healthcare   Workforce

Government Staff   Elected Officials   Faith Communities   Public Safety   Behavioral Health   Philanthropy

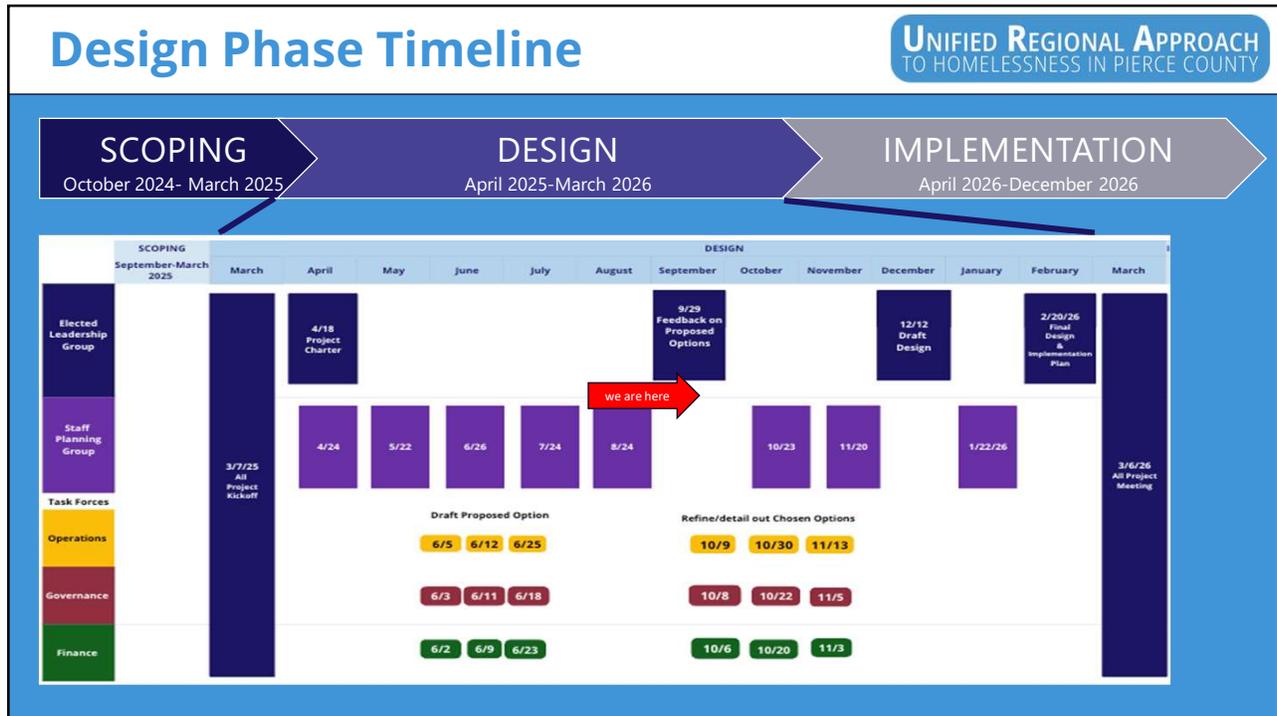
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## Elected Leadership Group

NAME	ROLE	REPRESENTING
<b>Nancy Backus</b>	Mayor of Auburn	Auburn
<b>John West</b>	Edgewood City, Council Position 5	Edgewood
<b>Kim Roscoe</b>	Mayor of Fife	Fife
<b>Mary Barber</b>	Mayor of Gig Harbor	Gig Harbor
<b>Mike Brandstetter</b>	Lakewood City, Position 2	Lakewood
<b>Jeff Sproul</b>	City of Orting, Council Position 4	Orting
<b>Ryan N. Mello</b>	Pierce County Executive	Pierce County
<b>Jani Hitchen</b>	Pierce County Council Chair, District 6	Pierce County
<b>Bryan Yambe</b>	Pierce County Council, District 5	Pierce County
<b>Ned Witting</b>	Puyallup City Council, District 3	Puyallup
<b>Sylvia Miller</b>	Puyallup Tribe Vice Chairwoman	Puyallup Tribe
<b>Sarah Rumbaugh</b>	Tacoma City Council, Position 2	Tacoma
<b>Victoria Woodards</b>	Mayor of Tacoma	Tacoma
<b>Sandesh Sadalge</b>	Tacoma City Council, Position 4	Tacoma
<b>Melanie Grassi</b>	University Place City Council, Position 7	University Place

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## Project Vision & Guiding Principles

**UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH**  
TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

A unified regional approach  
to substantially reduce homelessness  
so that it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Additional & Diverse Funding	Efficient & Focused	Transparency
Clear, Accountable & Outcome-driven	Flexible & Responsive	Shared Responsibility
Collaborative	Inclusive & Equitable	Trauma-informed & Empathetic
Data-informed	Optimized Grant-making Processes	Urgency & Action

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## Staff Planning Group

NAME	ROLE	REPRESENTING
<b>Devon Isakson</b>	Social Services Manager	Pierce County Human Services
<b>Caleb Carbone</b>	Homeless Strategy, Systems & Service Mgr	Tacoma
<b>Tiffany Speir</b>	Long Range & Strategic Planning Manager	Lakewood
<b>Mary Connolly</b>	Policy Analyst	Pierce County Council
<b>LeighBeth Merrick</b>	Strategic Advisor	Pierce County Executive
<b>Kent Hay</b>	Human Services Director	Auburn
<b>Keri Waterland</b>	Principal Policy Analyst	Pierce County Council
<b>Shea Smiley</b>	Housing, Health & Human Services Manager	Gig Harbor
<b>Jennifer Hales</b>	Director of Public Safety	University Place
<b>Doug Newman</b>	Assistant Police Chief	Fife

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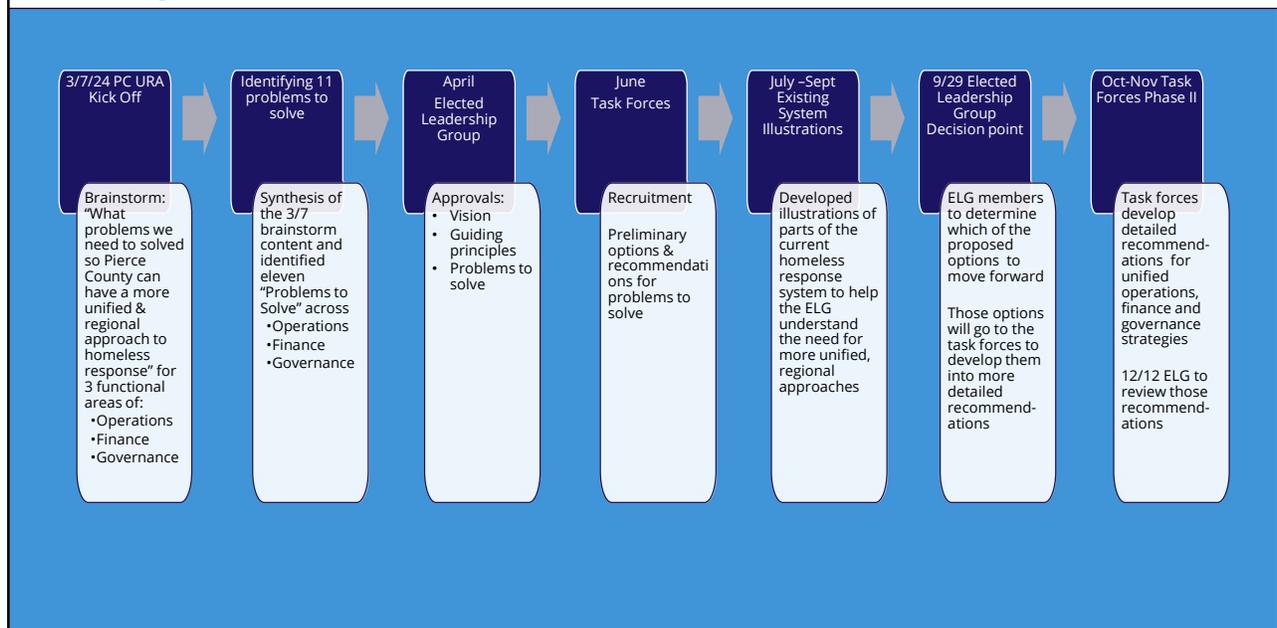
# Task Forces — ROSTERS

UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH  
TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

Operations	Governance	Finance
<p>FACILITATOR: LIZA BURELL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Dr. Alfonso Brown</b>, Let's Get to Work</li> <li><b>Annie Tustison</b>, Community Health Care of Tacoma</li> <li><b>Annika Fraga</b>, Associated Ministries</li> <li><b>Carlos Garcia</b>, Tacoma Community House, CoC Board</li> <li><b>Christina Alexander</b>, City of Auburn</li> <li><b>Cory Shears</b>, City of University Place</li> <li><b>David Bond</b>, Pierce County Code Enforcement</li> <li><b>Delci Whited</b>, Key Peninsula Community Services</li> <li><b>Emil Floresca</b>, Pierce County Human Services</li> <li><b>Heather Knous-Westfall</b>, Pierce County</li> <li><b>Jason Scales</b>, LASA Lakewood</li> <li><b>Josh Graham</b>, Family Promise of Pierce County</li> <li><b>Samie Iverson</b>, Tacoma Public Library + CoC Board</li> <li><b>Sherry Bernklau</b>, Interested Stakeholder</li> <li><b>Tamiko Jackson</b>, City of Fife</li> </ol>	<p>FACILITATOR: ANDRÉS MANTILLA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>George Conzuelo</b>, Family Promise of Pierce County</li> <li><b>Jay Worley</b>, SSHA3P board + CoC board</li> <li><b>Jody Davison</b>, City of Auburn</li> <li><b>Rob Huff</b>, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance</li> <li><b>Chief Rusty Wilder</b>, Pierce County Sheriff's Office</li> <li><b>Sally Perkins</b>, Hilltop neighborhood, Coalition to End Homelessness</li> <li><b>Tamera Shovein</b>, Multiple local organizations</li> <li><b>Tim Fairley</b>, Tacoma Volunteer Outreach + CoC Board</li> <li><b>Cynthia Stewart</b>, CoC Chair</li> <li><b>Mary Connolly</b>, Pierce County Council staff</li> <li><b>LeighBeth Merrick</b>, Pierce County Executive's Ofc</li> <li><b>Katie Blinn</b>, Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney's Ofc</li> <li><b>Michelle Camacho Estrada</b>, Our Sisters' House &amp; Crystal Judson Family Justice Center</li> </ol>	<p>FACILITATOR: NOEL FRAME</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Laurel Turner</b>, St. Francis House, Puyallup + CoC Board</li> <li><b>Ashley Howard</b>, Puyallup Tribe of Indians</li> <li><b>Steve Decker</b>, Family Promise of Pierce County</li> <li><b>Faatima Lawrence</b>, Catholic Community Services</li> <li><b>Dionne Jacobson</b>, St. Vincent de Paul</li> <li><b>Gerrit Nyland</b>, Volunteer &amp; Consultant</li> <li><b>Scott Schubert</b>, Metropolitan Development Council + CoC Board</li> <li><b>Ashley Colburn</b>, Pierce County</li> <li><b>Maya Ramos</b>, Black Collective, McKinney-Vento</li> <li><b>Mayor Josh Penner</b>, Orting + State Representative</li> <li><b>Bianca Shell</b>, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department</li> <li><b>Amy Richardson</b>, Pierce County Human Services</li> <li><b>Councilmember Ned Witting</b>, City of</li> </ol>

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# Design Phase — Problems to Solve to Recommendations



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Task Forces — PROBLEMS TO SOLVE			UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY
Operations	Governance	Finance	
<p>FACILITATOR: LIZA BURELL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single Point of Entry</li> <li>• Shared Data</li> <li>• Standard Contract Language</li> <li>• Standard Operating Processes</li> </ul>	<p>FACILITATOR: ANDRÉS MANTILLA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interlocal Agreements</li> <li>• Structure &amp; Authority</li> <li>• Individual Jurisdictional Engagement</li> </ul>	<p>FACILITATOR: NOEL FRAME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource Transparency</li> <li>• New &amp; Sustainable Revenue</li> <li>• Unified Funding Advocacy</li> <li>• Regional Approach to Service Contracts</li> </ul>	

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Task Forces — HIGHLIGHTS			UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY
Operations	Governance	Finance	
<p>FACILITATOR: LIZA BURELL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaged &amp; energetic</li> <li>• Lots of direct experience</li> <li>• Mostly realistic &amp; aligned</li> <li>• Focused on client experience</li> <li>• Importance of client &amp; provider perspective</li> </ul>	<p>FACILITATOR: ANDRÉS MANTILLA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curious &amp; Engaged</li> <li>• Wanting to know what will be governed</li> <li>• Varied perspectives &amp; lots of experience</li> <li>• Government staff, Community members, Continuum of Care &amp; Nonprofits</li> </ul>	<p>FACILITATOR: NOEL FRAME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full of ideas &amp; positive</li> <li>• Thoughtful about feasibility</li> <li>• Detailed</li> <li>• Excited about possibilities</li> <li>• Well-informed</li> <li>• Focused on what is possible if we work together – advocacy agenda</li> </ul>	

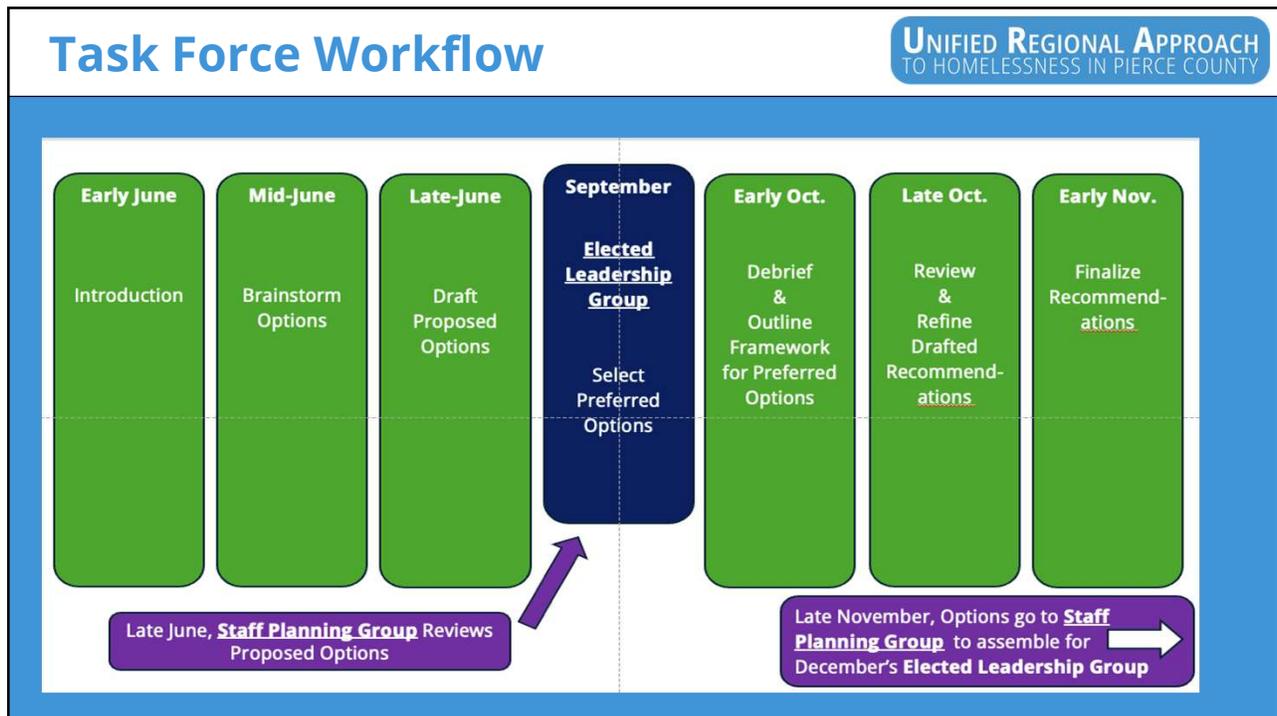
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## Existing System Illustrations

**UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH**  
 TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

	1. Single Point of Entry	2. Shared Data	3. Standard Contract Language	4. Standard Operating Processes	5. Resource Transparency	6. New & Sustainable Revenue	7. Unified Funding Advocacy	8. Regional Service Contracts	9. Interlocal Agreements	10. Structure & Authority	11. Jurisdictional Engagement
<b>Problems to Solve →</b>											
<b>Existing Systems Visuals ↓</b>											
1. Homeless Episodes by Jurisdiction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Entry & Assessment Points	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
3. Referral Relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Service Providers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Data Systems	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			
6. Data Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
7. Funding Contract Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Operating Procedures Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Funding Sources & Uses					✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
10. Revenue from Local Taxes					✓	✓	✓				✓
11. Public Affairs Staffing						✓	✓				✓
12. Governance of Existing Systems	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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## Next Steps:

UNIFIED REGIONAL APPROACH  
TO HOMELESSNESS IN PIERCE COUNTY

- Elected Leadership Group meets in September 29<sup>th</sup> to decide on proposed options
- Task Forces will then dive into operationalizing those options – Task Force Phase II
- Keep informed about the PC URA project:  
<https://www.unifiedregionalapproach.com>