

Addressing Homelessness Among Black San Diegans Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Minutes – 12/09/2020

Meeting Information		
Date: 12/09/2020	Time: 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM	Location: Zoom
Members Present: Rev. Rolland Slade, Sean Elo, James Carter, Christina Griffin, Dexter Egleston, Hanan Scrapper, Omar Passons, Veronica Loving, David Baker, Tracey Wilson		
Members Absent: Adrian Scott, Bobby Brown, Chelees Turner, Curtis Howard		
Staff Present: Kris Kuntz, Tamera Kohler, Carrie Stemrich (<i>notes</i>)		
Agenda Items		Presenter
1.	Welcome and Introductions	Rolland Slade
2.	Insight from LA's Process	Sean Spear
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New President/CEO of CHW (affordable housing development throughout the city and the county), has prior experience with managing housing development bureau in LA, and was on a committee to this one in LA that was mostly comprised of homeless services industry, those in public agencies, and those with lived experience. • Goals to set ground rules – honest conversation sans egos and was about moving forward with recommendations to move forward and make a difference. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some of those recommendations were macro (structural changes) - In LA, Black individuals make up 6% of the entire population, but account for 40% of the homeless population (including those who were placed but fell back into homelessness). • Looked at why people were falling into homelessness – many of them in poverty relative to overall population and recognizing that there were structural racism impediments that also contributed. • Went through process to have committee and take to the community (met all around the city in communities where there were higher populations of people of color to receive their input). • Made sure it was robust – data was key driver that fed into the conclusions and the recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some were macro in terms of structural change within agencies, looking at more preventative measures, and last, building apparatus for those who would fall into these situations in the future to provide them housing with services (short and long-term). • Nearly a year of process throughout with 67 direct, honest recommendations, and they have been reporting on a quarterly basis on the progress of those recommendations (active engagement and call to action), and people to hold accountable for those recommendations. • This amount of work was a large undertaking, but very rewarding (everyone was fully engaged throughout the process) • Hired a facilitating group outside of LAHSA (some with doctorates) to allow for this group to fully engage to spend time thinking and engaging rather than facilitating and taking notes. This big cost was well worth it to also ensure that LAHSA could be equally as engaged and part of the dialogue. • Critical to figure out the process and timeline and how long you will spend, background info wanted. <p><u>Tamera Kohler:</u> facilitator can lift up certain things and move the conversation along to provide good discussion that can be moved into action, and provided structure, and recommendations were ambitious but intentional.</p> <p><u>Sean Spear:</u> broke it down into components: what needed to be done short-term and long-term, what was service-related, access related, and brick-and-mortar to then break it down in groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to make sure that you have a respected facilitator who understands our way of communicating and also has strength to challenge them rather than spending time on a testimonial. • Also be able to connect them, such as if two parties are saying the same thing from a different point of view – someone who is experienced enough to cut through the conversation when needed. 		

Omar Passons: LAHSA seems like a large/robust counterpart to the RTFH – LA county has a homeless initiative in the office of the COA – is there a corollary in San Diego to help us understand?

Sean Spear: LAHSA was set up as a joint powers authority between the city and county. They are a services coordinator and funder, and the county has some functions directly that are somewhat coordinated by the county's Chief Administrative Officer, but there are real challenges.

- Sometimes there is too much or no support (such as delivering bad news)
- Providers suffer from turn-over and leadership changes – they are really vested, but need a lot of assistance with best practices.
- San Diego may be more manageable due to size (with management challenges and growth), but the key is that there needs to be the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible.

Tamera Kohler: A lot of money was thrown at LAHSA to accomplish what was needed but the infrastructure, best practices, and trust was not built.

- There were many advantages in LA, and many disadvantages, which is likely true of any community trying to address homelessness.
- There is no perfect structure - Few want to take accountability for what is not working, and accountability is one of the hardest things to achieve. We are moving in the right direction, but there is no perfect structure.
- Best thing we can do is have these conversations and get the buy-in from the street to the board room (where do we overlap).

Sean Spear: Measure H came in - \$354 million but apparatus was not built for that, and they are now feeling the pains of planning miscalculations.

Tamera Kohler: We have a limited pool of resources in people (staffing) – When you have an already scarce framework and a scarcity of financial resources that may not create the planned outcomes.

- A lot of good work came out of LAHSA but they were able to hire the best in the business to facilitate, analyze data, and bring people together, so we should not skimp on this either.
- If we need a strong facilitator, this needs to be asked for now so Tamera can obtain the financial resources.

Sean Spear: Critical to do the early work thoroughly to make things easier down the road.

Dexter Egleston: Agree that we need a strong facilitator – since these conversations need to happen on a virtual platform, it takes more skill to pull together.

Sean Spear: LA's was accomplished in person rather than virtually, and it still took awhile to build that trust, especially for those with lived experience (led by a person who wasn't black, though there were other staff who were).

Dexter Egleston: Were there unforeseen barriers that you had to navigate throughout the process outside of the facilitator?

Sean Spear: 2 Co-chairs were LAHSA Board Members, 1 of whom could not remain engaged due to changing work - not a loss of confidence, but this put all the work on the other person.

- Changing staff and bringing people up to speed slowed the process.
- Impressed with engagement of community meetings, and people felt really heard.
 - In the mornings, folks in the community would identify challenges, and later in the afternoon, the committee reacted to what the community said to highlight what to move forward with.

Hanan Scrapper: Challenge is doing this virtually – digital divide exists. especially in communities where they would like to do this. Question - Was there an RFP process for making the selection?

Sean Spear: LAHSA's BOD made the selection, assume there was an RFP process, but will need to check.

Dexter Egleston: How did you initially plan in the beginning and divide up the work to ensure nothing falls through the cracks?

Sean Spear: Facilitator worked with staff to digest the meeting information, and committee members were not involved in developing the report (LAHSA staff was), and the facilitator led that for the staff to complete the background analysis.

Dexter Egleston: What was the most impactful, previously unknown finding in the LA market?

Sean Spear: The need for proactive homeless prevention to keep people from falling into homelessness in the first place.

- People think of homelessness as street homelessness (those who are homeless for a long time), but at least in LA county, the majority were homeless for the first time in the 1 or 2 years leading up to it, according to their Point in Time counts.
- Learned that this is a fluid situation for folks.
 - Some fall in tough situations and stay in, some get out more quickly (resembling a bell curve).
 - Learned it is best if you can create interventions to keep them out of those situations in the first place, like providing short-term emergency rental assistance and training opportunities.

Veronica Loving: Did you find that wrap-around services were helpful (mental health, substance abuse, outpatient/inpatient)?

Sean Spear: A lot was being able to work with people beyond that initial assessment – people are prideful about the extent of their struggles and not trusting or ready to divulge everything.

- Needs to be a process over time – cannot work off of one assessment.

Veronica Loving: Especially in African American community, they did not believe in therapy - important to build a rapport.

Tamera Kohler: Our system of housing and prioritizations are based on those first assessments where people do not show all of their cards, thus the importance of engaging with them over time.

- Shows up in so many ways in getting them the services and housing that they need, and the hope is that this stays in the discussion.

Sean Spear: The people that understand the difference – the system needs to adjust to the reality of meeting people where they are at.

Sean Elo: Did you experience attempts from others to get ahead of recommendations likely made by your committee – things we expect to be recommendations related to systemic drivers of homelessness?

- Can see folks not wanting the most direct way, and curious to see if that happened in LA, and lessons learned about not allowing folks to strategically stay ahead of the tough truth.

Sean Spear: More focused on agencies – if there was something clear floated up about a failing of the process, this would be highlighted as something that needed to be addressed now.

- Most of the time it was around intake on what to ask and put into the database – i.e. looked at where there was greater recidivism and showed that it was often on the hard substance abuse, whereas if it was mental health or lighter substance abuse they had more success to stay in the process (less opportunity to fall back into homelessness).
- Recognize what happens when we treat everyone the same way rather than focusing on harder cases where more time needs to be spent (and often contracts are set up to handle the easier cases).

Sean Elo: Also sees the criminal justice system as an example of driving homelessness – he would image that they have recommendations of ways for them to do more to mitigate the increase in homelessness, and can see that many would say that they had already made adjustments/corrections.

Sean Spear: connection with the criminal justice system plays a role in people being able to keep their housing, or if they ended up in a situation and needed to move, they were already knocked out of contention for finding a new place due to their record disqualifying them for housing.

- This fed into homeless prevention measures – such having these types of questions on rental applications

David Baker: Do you have any tips/tricks on steps that LAHSA took to provide oversight to ensure these recommendations made it into implementation?

Sean Spear: They were at every meeting and had items to report out on, and regularly presented on different elements of their work. It was educational and helped with identifying what they were doing, but recommends finding out more on this from LAHSA.

Kris Kuntz: LAHSA hired 3-4 dedicated staff to implement this plan, but there are also long-term needs to accomplish.

3. Input on Draft Work Plan

Committee members

Sean Elo: Would like to walk through who would like to work on each activity to put together work plan. The Purpose and Goals of the committee was taken from the conversation from last meeting.

Tamera Kohler: Do we have an understanding of how to work in a COVID space? Cannot happen safely in the next few months, and using virtual technology will be a barrier for those we need to hear from. Need to consider the environment.

- Facilitator in this plan needs to be built in now so she can get the resources to bring them in early.

Kris Kuntz: Agree that next 3-6 months will be different, but smaller group may be able to approach this in our current environment. We will have a working group together by January to be able to move forward.

- Committee will need to fill in the target completion dates
- Sequencing is important

Rolland Slade: This group is unanimous about getting a Facilitator, so what are the next steps?

Tamera Kohler: Make an ask during next week's Board Meeting to allow her to get to work to find the funding to support this.

Omar Passons: It sounds like LA had more people in their group than we do. If it would be one cost to facilitate this group and several listening sessions vs. a lessor cost to just complete listening sessions, there is room for the possibility for facilitator to be more focused on what happens in the community may be more relevant, since people in this meeting know and work together.

Rolland Slade: He has a tendency to ask for more funding, so this is a good idea if it comes back.

Omar Passons: Speaking to this, if there is an opportunity to ask for more – he can see leveraging a portion of this resource of a team of those with lived experience across the county modeled after a Promotora model to better engage. If there is only one budget, he would like to see us fund people who we are trying to build a system to support.

Sean Elo: Are any of our goals not accounted for in the activity?

James Carter: Maybe we shouldn't shy away from the data piece of presenting this information on a project level – accountability on a system level to know which providers are serving better relative to others (even if it is uncomfortable).

Activity 1: Engage the Community and Listen

Volunteers – David Baker, Hanan Scrapper, Veronica Loving, Tracey Wilson

Chat section – Tracey Wilson

- I can definitely get input from individuals with lived experience from my clients in housing

Activity 2: Conduct In-Depth System and Data Analysis

Volunteers – Omar Passons, James Carter, Dexter Egleston, RTFH Support (data lead)

Chat section – Omar Passons:

- I don't think all my comments fit super neatly into sub-sections.
- Who we listen to. I tend to agree that listening to people is important as is in depth data analysis. I wonder if we may need to spend some intentional time on who we are listening to in a way that maximizes the likelihood that we are listening both to people who have lived expertise generally and who those who may have other very specific items to share. For example, if the data reveals where most Black San Diegans who are experiencing homelessness are coming from within San

Diego County communities, we may want to over-sample people in those communities. Or, we may want to be intentional about connecting with families of Black San Diegans experiencing homelessness.

- How we decide who we will reach out and engage - this is just a starting point.

Chat section – James Carter:

- Activity 2b should dig deeper beyond system performance measures to include projects, agencies, etc.

Chat section – Omar Passons:

- Missing Activity: Nothing I can see in the workgroup addresses whether we will make recommendations with regard to influencing RFPs/NOFAs/etc within the bounds of HUD and other guidance. That doesn't seem to be captured in this work plan
- I'm not presupposing a yes vote by the Board on whatever recommendations come forward. And whichever ones do get adopted, I'd like to be sure we all know on the front end what the expectations are
- And also consider whether the "what next" is another Activity or a more identified part of Activity 4

Omar Passons: One of the areas we need to come to terms with and reach collective understanding as a workgroup – not who gets what money (that is separate issues), once HUD and other funders are cleared within lawful mandates (RFP Structure), what role does this group play to influence/ensure greater equity associated with addressing Black homelessness in those processes?

- Example: Workforce Partnership recent RFP brought together homeless youth, former drop-outs, community college – a range of people to build the substance of the most recent WIOA (Workforce Investment Opportunity Act).
- May be possible with more intelligence gathered by this group to potentially offer recommendations to the RTFH about that moving forward. That's not in these and would like to flag this.
- Community Standards – document required by HUD that should set expectations for homeless service provision. We are in the process of updating these standards at the project level for different interventions but we also have system standards (housing first, trauma-informed), and one thing that should be brought from this group is addressing racial disparity to be embedded as an expectations of a program that get this type of funding.
- Also, how does this group set policies?

Activity 3: Ensure a Robust Committee
--

<i>Volunteers</i> – Everyone/Collective responsibility (and facilitator should also be able to help should that be approved)
--

Activity 4: Develop Report and Promote Action
--

<i>Volunteers</i> – Dexter Egleston, Veronica Loving, David Baker

Omar Passons: there should be a 5th Activity to hold people accountable for next steps to keep it all going.

James Carter: This may be incorporated in “f,” but may be presumptuous. May add “g” to be more explicit and measure/monitor the impact of this effort.

Sean Elo: May need to advocate and demand that some of the recommendations be put into place. In thinking about the goal – may need to build in the action that will generate action into the workplan.

James Carter: At minimum, the disparities index needs to be reported on.

Omar Passons: Will this become staff responsibility or report back to someone (human infrastructure piece)

Tamera Kohler: This will require full time position with the RTFH should we move in this direction – implementation is one piece, while reporting, accountability, and moving work forward takes a commitment from the Board

- Are we reporting back to the Board, or this committee – how we will need to be structured to meet the expectation to embed the work in practice (RFP's, contract language), and how it is accounted for and measured, quality/system improvements – all of this does not happen without attention to it

- Begin with the end in mind – what is the expectation to hold those recommendations to implementation and outcomes should be worked into the workplan to be able to build that into the budget (cost for facilitator and staff to hold the work accountable).

Sean Elo: There are certain limitations of the CoC and RTFH - wonder if rather than this effort being housed within the CoC or staffed by RTFH that it is held by a group that does not have the same restraints/confines.

Tamera Kohler: When are we advocating and when are we measuring these – performance of existing programs within the HMIS. If the expectation is that the RTFH perform a lot of follow-up, there will be a staff person dedicated to this, but we hold unique role as the CoC with policy, practices, strategic planning, and the data.

- This does not have to be decided today – think about this in the workplan
- Our commitment to this committee is to find the funding.

5. Next Steps - 5 minutes

Kris Kuntz

Kris Kuntz: Workplan is still a work in progress, get folks together in the topics of data, engagement, data.

- Bringing the idea of a facilitator to the Board next week and will help shake some of the information with the workplan.
- Input /thinking on what is the long-range planning.

Rolland Slade: He, Tamera, and Kris will get together before the end of the week to prepare for next week to share where they are in the process with the Board and provide an ask for a Facilitator.

Next Meeting: Date: Jan. 13, 2021 **Time:** 12:30-2:00 p.m. **Location:** Zoom Meeting