



September ____, 2020

To: Greater Tacoma Community Foundation

From: Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

Recommendations for Pierce County Connected Funding:

Who We Are:

The Tacoma/Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness is a loose network of individuals, non-profit agencies, government agencies, and community businesses working together to serve people experiencing homelessness. Each week, 50-100 coalition participants meet and more than 400 people are on the Coalition's email distribution list.

Why This Letter:

In response to a verbal request from the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, we have discussed emerging needs and potential responses the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation could make to assist persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, the staff and organizations which assist them, and the overall system itself. We did not seek consensus on these recommendations but generated a range of options for consideration by the GTCF to address the coming COVID-19 Winter. Quite simply: We want to ensure that no one dies this winter.

Our recommendations address the need for a **County-wide COVID-19 Winter Shelter Plan for October 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021**. This plan would address the needs of people experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are living unsheltered, as well as the needs of the staff and organizations which make up the homelessness response system, and the system itself. Data, from the 2016 SPARC Report and the Washington State Department of Commerce 2020 Eviction Rent Assistance Program Guidelines, support what we all see: people of color, people with disabilities, people on the margins are disproportionately affected by the joint emergencies of COVID-19 and homelessness.

We ask the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation to reserve a minimum of \$1Million dollars from the Pierce County Connected Fund to design and implement a COVID-19 Winter Shelter Plan with the following recommendations:

Invest at least \$50,000 to manage the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Winter Shelter Plan

Invest at least \$950,000 in direct response to carry out the COVID-19 Winter Shelter Plan

Recommendation One:

Invest at least \$50,000 to manage the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Winter Shelter Plan

Hire an experienced project manager to use the information in Recommendation Two to finalize a simple, straightforward plan to shelter everyone in Pierce County this winter. This plan will have clear measurable objectives and timelines. The project manager will work within the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation organizational structure.

Recommendation Two: Invest at least \$950,000 in direct response

1. Unsheltered People Experiencing Homelessness

Suspend sweeps, “move alongs,” and other enforced relocations of people experiencing homelessness until there is real time shelter available for each person.

Increase safe shelter options: hotel room vouchers with a priority for families with children, the elderly, people with disabilities and/or underlying health conditions, people who are ill; Safe Parking Program lots; self-managed permitted tent encampments; tiny house villages, RV parks, additional Stability Sites, warming sites, day shelters.

Open public facilities and public lands for safe shelter options.

Provide water, hand washing stations, toilets, access to showers and laundry, Personal Protective Equipment, rain gear, cold weather gear, at each safe shelter option.

Invest in mobile resources: offices, showers, laundry, toilets, assistance with employment and benefits, Telehealth, digital access.

Expand outreach teams/housing navigators/case managers.

2. Sheltered People Experiencing Homelessness

Ensure adequate Personal Protective Equipment for everyone

Suspend time limits in shelters

Move the elderly, sick, those at highest risk for COVID-19, those with disabilities to hotel rooms

3. Homelessness Response System Provider Staff

Ensure adequate Personal Protective Equipment

Determine a workable staff: client ratio

Establish a Provider Relief Fund (0% interest/no fee loans) for staff financially impacted by COVID-19

4. Homelessness Response System Provider Organizations

Continue Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Community Branch Shelter Consultations and implement recommendations,

Evaluate safe emergency use of space, status of HVAC systems,

Review financial impact of cash flow required for large reimbursable contracts, increased COVID-19 operating costs, fair administrative/indirect cost for new COVID-19 related programs, ability of small organizations to manage government funding

5. Homelessness Response System Actions and Policies

Enhance the commitment to racial equity.

Maximize the Eviction Prevention Programs - legal help, rent and utility assistance,
Negotiate one system-wide hotel voucher rate and lease; capitalize hotel room leases for six-twelve months.

Improve real time referral information for people experiencing homelessness

Invest in land, laundromats, hotels and digital upgrades for organizations, staff, clients

Expand Rapid Re-Housing and provide incentives for landlords; Increase Diversion funding per client

Identify funding for post-CARES Relief Fund support

Set-up safe learning situations for children experiencing homelessness

Expand medically appropriate shelter options for people coming from hospitals

Determine the long term health care cost of provider shelter vs people living unsheltered

Reach out to Joint Base Lewis McChord and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources for recommendations for safe, sanitary, short-term shelter.

Pause local jurisdictions' permitting and zoning regulations

Review the patchwork of codes, ordinances, policies, and programs affecting people experiencing homelessness in each jurisdiction

Advise each jurisdiction of opportunities to prevent homelessness and respond to people already experiencing homelessness

Monitor use of federal, state, and local government resources including measurable outcomes

Increase support from the business community

How to Connect With Us:

We offer these recommendations for your consideration now, and as an invitation to a continuing dialogue with us on practical measures to ensure adequate shelter for all in Pierce County. You are welcome to join us at any of our weekly meetings, currently online, from 9-11 a.m. Our meeting agendas, online access information, minutes, and ZOOM recordings are available at www.pchomeless.org (<http://www.pchomeless.org>).

Thank you for your commitment to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness across our county in these unprecedented times.

We look forward to a continuing conversation.