

August 2020

A REGIONAL ACTION FRAMEWORK FOR KING COUNTY HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE

About the **Framework**

3 Legs of a Stool

Through activities conducted since January 2018 it has become clear that philanthropic and public sector partners across King County are poised to take action in unprecedented ways that will increase alignment on funding, policy and program decisions related to homelessness:

1. The implementation of a King County **Regional Homelessness Authority** (KCRHA) to consolidate funding and policy regarding homeless *crisis response* activities across Seattle and King County, and to provide an accountability mechanism for community-wide action and alignment. An Inter-local Agreement passed by City and County Councils in December 2019 established a Governmental Administrative Agency between King County and the City of Seattle, and allows additional parties to sign on later as subscribing agencies.
2. Development of an **External Partners Group** to ensure that key community leaders including philanthropy, business, people with lived experience, and advocates can coordinate and align with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority to cultivate solutions to homelessness that are racially equitable, community driven and data-informed.
3. The design of this **Framework for Regional Action**, which establishes the direction of the region's coordinated efforts on homelessness by articulating a clear vision and priorities, recommending specific policies, strategies and actions, and establishing measures for success. The Framework is not the implementation plan for the King County Regional Homelessness Authority, but is a broad-based community plan that will guide the homelessness-related work of the community as a whole.

Balancing Priorities

It is important to note that the Framework attempts to appropriately balance a number of competing interests that are evident in many geographically large, diverse and complex homeless assistance systems. In particular, it attempts to balance:

- ✓ The need for long-term solutions and short-term/interim actions to address the homeless crisis in Seattle-King County,
- ✓ The different needs that are present in urban, suburban and rural areas of the County, and
- ✓ Aggressive but pragmatic approaches to addressing unmet needs in housing, services and crisis response.

Principles

RACIAL EQUITY

People of color, especially Black and American Indian/Alaska Native communities, are disproportionately impacted by homelessness and housing instability in King County. RAF implementation must be grounded in the principles of racial equity to address and ameliorate this reality.

VALUING VOICES OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

People with lived experience must be equal partners in this work, and can provide the expertise required to design a system and programs that reflects their needs.

THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Homelessness in King County is caused by a lack of housing affordable to people who have low and extremely low incomes. While other proximal causes of homelessness may exist in a household (i.e., job loss, health crisis, substance use, mental health crises), the primary solution to homelessness is to ensure that every household has access to a permanent and safe place to live that provides the stability needed to weather crises without losing one's home.

The Framework **should not be seen as a static document**. While it is a critical milestone on this community's journey towards ending its homeless crisis, to be successful the community must be **diligent and disciplined** in its process, to be **dynamic** in its planning and equally **rigorous** in its efforts to measure progress. The community must be able to determine when mid-course corrections are needed and nimble enough to execute on those corrections as they arise.

Important Context for the **Framework**

Homelessness and Racial Inequity in Seattle-King County

Homelessness does not affect all racial and ethnic groups equally—Black and Native Americans in particular are dramatically more likely to become homeless than their White counterparts, and they face unique barriers to exiting homelessness.

Center for Social Innovation
March 2018

- Nationally, people of color experience homelessness at a rate higher than their representation in the general population.
- This is not a coincidence – it is directly tied to the nation’s history of structural and institutional racism and the treatment of indigenous people.
- In King County, institutionalized discrimination against people of color over time – especially Black and American Indian/Alaska Native populations – has resulted in impacts that families and individuals still face.
- According to the Antiracist Research and Policy Center’s [COVID Racial Data Tracker](#), people of color in Washington are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 – while at the same time being disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

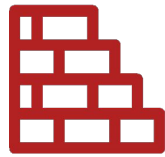
Homelessness and Housing

A recent series of interrelated housing market dynamics have created a perfect storm related to housing instability and homelessness for King County residents with the lowest incomes. Today's public health emergency further illuminates how critical affordable and supportive housing are to the health and safety of individuals, families and communities.

- 98% of the households who entered homelessness in King County in 2018 had extremely low incomes of about \$23,000/year for a household of one and \$33,000 for a household of four.
- The homeless crisis is, in fact, an affordable housing crisis for households with the lowest incomes.
- Of the 72,000 renter households in King County with extremely low incomes, only 29,481 have access to apartments or rental vouchers affordable to them.
- 22,500 of these renter households are experiencing homelessness
- The remaining households who attempt to rent in the private market must pay more than 60% of their incomes on rent and utilities.
- This unsustainable rent burden makes it likely that one in every two of these households will experience homelessness each year

RAF Goals and Structure

Regional Action Framework: Components



1.

**Coordination
& Foundational Items
(The System)**



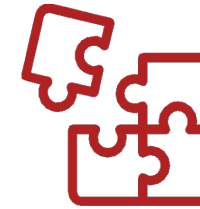
2.

**Affordable
Housing**



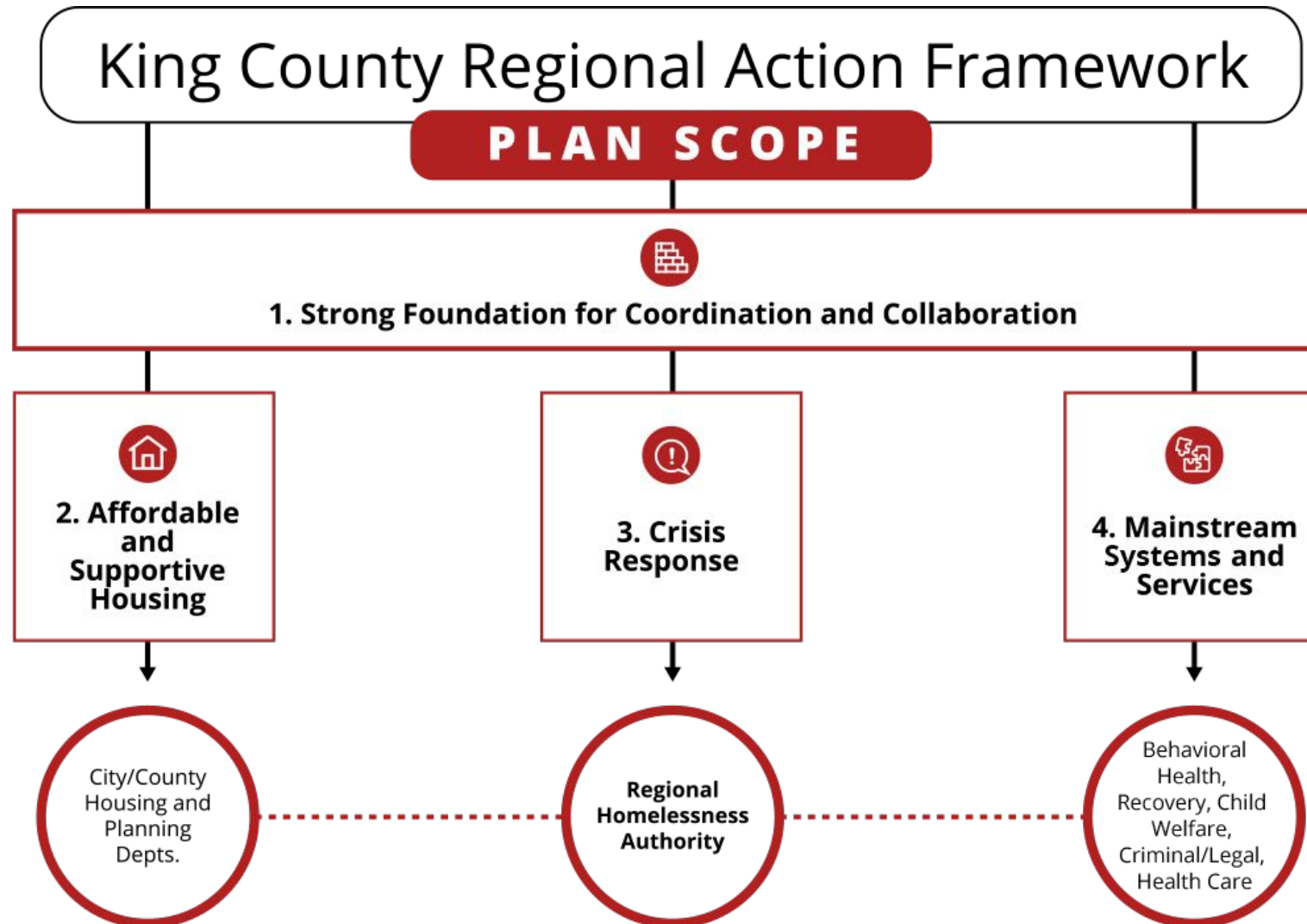
3.

**Crisis
Response**



4.

**Mainstream
Systems**



Vision and System Goals

Long Term Vision (15-20 year goal)

By working together and intentionally focusing on communities of color most impacted by homelessness, the King County Region will build an equitable system that quickly moves people who experience homelessness into appropriate, safe and sustainable housing, and prevents people from becoming homeless whenever possible.

Strategies and Actions Focused on:

Reducing Inflow, Addressing the Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness, and Increasing Outflow through

- 1. Coordination and Foundational Items,**
- 2. Housing,**
- 3. Crisis Response,** and
- 4. Mainstream Systems.**



Interim Goal (3-5 years) Significantly decrease homelessness

Decrease homelessness among highly impacted populations through a racial equity approach.

End unsheltered homelessness for children and families in King County.

End homelessness for unaccompanied youth and young adults.

Significantly decrease unsheltered homelessness.



1

Coordination & Foundational Items



1 Coordination & Foundational Items

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Mayors and County Executive direct cross-system implementation of the Framework.
- Collaboration between systems in alignment with Framework.
- City/County Councils appropriate funds to implement Framework.
- KC Regional Homelessness Authority acts as liaison to mainstream systems.
- External Partners Group reports investments to KCHRA and holds government accountable.

YEAR ONE PRIORITIES

- System-wide policy development to reduce disproportionality and disparities.
- Improve and empower Coordinated Entry as a foundational system element.
- Implement Framework accountability mechanisms.
- Develop sub-regional implementation plans.
- Implement system-level planning.
- Coordinate communications across partners.

LONG TERM PRIORITIES

- Develop and implement a person-centered approach to address the needs of all sub-populations.
- Identify unique needs of specific sub-populations.
- Conduct system and program evaluation/continuous quality improvement.
- Implement and maintain evidence-based approaches and best practices.
- Invest in sector capacity and workforce quality.
- Advocacy to State and Federal government for increased/adjusted resources for housing and services.

Use of Racial Equity and Social Justice Structure for Accountable Decision Making across all components robust sub-regional planning that clearly addresses subpopulations and disparities



2 Affordable & Supportive Housing





2 ELI Affordable & Supportive Housing

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Mayors and County Executive raise new investments and direct implementation of the ELI Housing Plan.
- ELI Housing Pipeline implementation is aligned with other housing plans and Framework strategies.
- City/County Councils raise/appropriate funds/provide authority for revenue development.
- State and local jurisdictions administer federal pass-through dollars according to local priorities.
- PHAs and non-profits develop and operate ELI housing.
- All parties participate in advocacy at state and federal levels.

YEAR ONE PRIORITIES

Using a racial equity focus: Create an ELI Pipeline Plan with metrics for affordable and supportive housing.

- Begin raising new capital and operating revenue for ELI housing.
- Financially support the capacity of supporting housing providers to maximize Foundational Community Supports.
- Coordinate efforts of suburban cities to support the ELI pipeline.
- Implement regulatory and policy changes to incentivize affordable housing development.
- Identify options/alternative construction methods to decrease cost of development.

LONG TERM PRIORITIES

- Raise enough revenue to meet the ELI affordable and supportive housing need.
- Expand capacity to develop and operate new ELI housing.
- Expand capacity to provide tenancy support services in supportive housing.
- Maximize the innovative uses of dedicated public resources and landlord engagement to expand housing options.



2 Affordable & Supportive Housing

Affordable housing is the solution to homelessness and is a documented social determinant of health. Supportive housing is an evidence-based intervention for a subset of people who need affordable housing and tenancy support services.

The Framework focuses on housing that is affordable to people with extremely low incomes (ELI) because 98% of households experiencing homelessness in King County are in this income range.

Context:

- There is a lack of 41,000 apartments affordable to ELI renters in King County. As a result, 22,500 are experiencing homelessness; 14,500 are experiencing severe rent burdens and are at risk of homelessness; and nearly 4,000 are unnecessarily living in or cycling between institutional and residential settings.
- Of the 41,000 ELI affordable apartments needed, an estimated 10,500 will need to be paired with tenancy support services to create Supportive Housing for a subset of ELI renters who need assistance accessing and remaining in housing.



3 Crisis
Response





3 Crisis Response

ACCOUNTABILITY

- KCHRA leads on activities.
- KCHRA collaborates with mainstream systems in alignment with Framework.
- City/County Councils appropriate funds to implement Framework.
- State and federal funds allocated by grantees.
- Advocacy at state and federal levels.
- External Partners Group reports investments to KCHRA and holds government accountable.

YEAR ONE PRIORITIES

- Using an equity focus: Improve and empower Coordinated Entry as a foundational system element.
- Close gap in households enrolled versus housed in Rapid Re-Housing.
- Scale diversion to as close to 10% of inflow as possible.
- Right-size temporary options (shelter and safe parking).
- Develop implementation and sub-regional plans.
- Establish annual metrics.

LONG TERM PRIORITIES

- Decrease inflow by scaling diversion to at least 10% of inflow.
- Decrease inflow through scaling prevention programs across all systems.
- Implement coordinated outreach framework.

Use of Racial Equity and Social Justice Structure for Accountable Decision Making across all components robust sub-regional planning that clearly addresses subpopulations and disparities




3 Crisis Response

The Framework for Regional Action on Homelessness identifies the need to build sufficient affordable and supportive housing supply to solve the homeless crisis, and calls for aggressive interim strategies to address **immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness.**

The system as a whole should continue to **scale** the crisis response system through implementation of **enhanced shelter**, creating a **coordinated outreach** framework, and enhancing the **services** necessary to support medical, substance use, behavioral health and other needs of people living in shelter and in unsheltered locations.



4 Mainstream Systems and Services



4 Mainstream Systems and Services

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Mayors and County Executive direct cross-system implementation of the Framework.
- Collaboration between systems in alignment with Framework. Leadership council reports on collaboration to Mayors and County Executive.
- City/County Councils appropriate funds/provide authority for revenue development.
- State and federal funds allocated by grantees and PHAs.
- Advocacy at state and federal levels.

YEAR ONE PRIORITIES

Using Equity focus: Inreach into acute care settings/hospitals to identify and prioritize at-risk families with Children.

- Conduct inreach into institutional settings to identify areas that prevention can be implemented or improved.
- Create plans for mainstream implementation of Framework.
- Establish annual metrics.

LONG TERM PRIORITIES

- Create cross-system leadership council to develop plan to reduce inflow into homelessness.
- Align access to behavioral health and other health care services for housing and crisis response.
- Reduce inflow through cross-system collaboration and data sharing
- Increase income and employment for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Use of Racial Equity and Social Justice Structure for Accountable Decision Making across all components robust sub-regional planning that clearly addresses subpopulations and disparities



4 Mainstream Systems and Services

Mainstream systems intersect with homelessness in important ways that could be changed to serve people better:

- Child Welfare, Justice and Healthcare are often feeder systems into homelessness, and
- the behavioral health/recovery and workforce systems are a resource for people in institutional and congregate settings who could instead be receiving those services in supportive housing to end or prevent homeless episodes.

While mainstream service systems are designed to provide healthcare, rehabilitation, independence, and support, they are often ill-equipped to serve the people who need them the most. As a result, resources are wasted and racial inequities are perpetuated.

The homeless system cannot address these issues alone. Therefore it is critical that mainstream systems are fully engaged in activities designed to both decrease the inflow into homelessness and increase exits from homelessness into stable housing through the provision of appropriate services. **The homeless system will never be successful if it continues to bear the burden of addressing the inadequacies of mainstream service systems while attempting to re-house people with the greatest needs.**

Measuring Progress: Outcomes and Milestones

Progress Against the Framework for Regional Action

The KCRHA must build a **data-informed culture** within the new organization that relies on real-time information to make informed decisions, determine when mid-course corrections are needed and make resource allocations.

Using this data on a regular basis, and reporting progress or challenges to people with lived experience, the broader community and to organizational leadership increases transparency, accountability and trust across the system.

The tools needed to build this culture at the KCRHA already exist – the HMIS system and current analytic capabilities of staff and technology are well positioned for this purpose.

Tracking System Outputs and Outcomes: Year One

OUTPUTS
Development of Implementation Plans and Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing Development and Revenue Generation• Crisis Response (ILA Required)• Mainstream Systems• Development of Sub-Regional Plans
Development of Coordination and Foundational Items
Improvement and Expansion of CEA (process steps e.g. staffing, unit tracking, tool development, by name list development, contract language, etc.)
Temporary Options: Number of ES Beds and Safe Parking Slots as Compared to 2019 Baseline
Diversion Slots and Funding
Data quality for HMIS/CEA

Tracking System Outputs and Outcomes: Year One

OUTCOMES
Number/percentage of total inflow of households diverted
Inflow into CEA – Number of households, race, location at entry (other systems) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families/children • YYA • Unsheltered (include veterans and CH here) • Newly homeless/returns to homelessness
Outflow: Placed into housing through CEA (including race) – Number of households and destination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families/children • YYA • Unsheltered (include veterans and CH here)
Households housed through RRH against 2019 baseline (versus enrolled only)
Number of children in unsheltered locations Number of children in shelter and entering from hospitals
Total number of unsheltered persons (HMIS)
Average length of homeless episode (Families, YYA, Unsheltered including Veterans and CH)
Disproportionality at entry and exit. Relative/absolute difference between race/ethnicity distribution of system inflow/outflow and the King County population