



Chicago Continuum of Care Implementation Structure 2022 Guidebook

Updated May 12, 2022

Contents

Introduction	3
Changes From Prior Guidebook	3
Coc Implementation Structure Questions and Suggestions	3
CoC Implementation Structure Key Components.....	4
Component 1: Strategic Priority Areas (referred to as Lines of Action)	4
Component 2: CoC System Goals.....	4
Component 3: Intentional Opportunities for Influence and Action.....	4
Component 4: Meeting Structure, Facilitation, and Decision- Making Processes.....	5
CoC Implementation Structure Roles and Responsibilities.....	5
CoC Board of Directors	5
All Chicago	5
Line of Action Leadership Teams	6
Affinity Groups	6
People with Lived Experience	6
CoC Members.....	6
Lead Agencies.....	6
Appendices.....	7
Appendix A - Lines of Action	8
Appendix B – CoC IS Leadership Team Guidelines.....	10
Appendix C – Quarterly Strategy Session Schedule and Agenda	12
Appendix D – Meeting Structure, Facilitation, and Decision-Making Processes	13
Appendix E – Affinity Groups	17
Appendix F – CoC Member Roles.....	19
Appendix G – CoC IS Leadership Team Member Commitment Form.....	20

Introduction

In Chicago, the [Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#) leads the efforts to prevent and end homelessness. The work of the CoC is governed by a [charter](#) and an elected [Board of Directors](#).

Homelessness is a multifaceted problem that stems from a lack of social protection and the failure of many systems. Homelessness cannot be solved by individual people or agencies alone. Rather, ending homelessness requires collective community action.

The CoC began working with consultants in 2016 to enhance the CoC's collective work. Building from stakeholder interviews, an analysis of strengths and weaknesses within the CoC, and Chicago's plan to end homelessness, the consultants created the CoC Action Agenda. The Action Agenda served as a strategic workplan to make the CoC, All Chicago, and the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) more responsive, collaborative and action oriented. The Action Agenda was affirmed by the CoC Board and the full CoC membership in late 2017; it was also endorsed by the mayor's office. From 2017 to 2019, the Action Agenda was co-led by staff from DFSS and All Chicago. In 2020, DFSS determined it could no longer co-lead the Action Agenda; All Chicago continued to lead the Action Agenda. Through a series of CoC conversations in 2020, the All Chicago and CoC Board refined and updated the Action Agenda, which was relaunched as the CoC Implementation Structure (CoC IS).

This guidebook outlines how the CoC collaborates to make progress toward its system goals of preventing and ending homelessness. The CoC IS is modeled after leading practices in collective action, primarily drawing from the Collective Impact model. "Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration."¹

Without structured collaboration, chaos can ensue, leading to lags in progress, stagnation, or negative impacts on system goals. Although Collective Impact is only one format for structuring collaborative efforts, its deep roots in large-scale social systems provide structured examples that the CoC can pull from. At the same time, we should expect the CoC IS operations and components to evolve as our system and knowledge about collective action changes. For example, in the article "[Collaborating for Equity and Justice: Moving Beyond Collective Impact](#)," critics of the Collective Impact model outline additional ways the CoC can incorporate equity and justice into our work.

Changes From Prior Guidebook

In 2021, All Chicago published the first CoC Implementation Structure Community Guide, intended to outline the development and operations of the CoC IS. Throughout 2021, conversations were held to ensure that all CoC members understood the CoC IS and how strategic priorities are being advanced. The 2022 guidebook reflects issues and solutions raised through the series of conversations about meeting facilitation, decision making, and how Affinity Groups contribute to the CoC IS.

Coc Implementation Structure Questions and Suggestions

Questions about the CoC IS Guidebook, structure, and operations can be emailed to cocprograms@allchicago.org. All Chicago collects ongoing feedback on the CoC Implementation Structure operations and guidebook via [this form](#). All CoC Members are encouraged to provide feedback and ask questions at any time. Feedback is extremely helpful in guiding the collaborative efforts of the CoC

¹ Citation - Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective Impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review.

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact#:~:text=Large%2Dscale%20social%20change%20requires,isolated%20intervention%20of%20individual%20organizations.

CoC Implementation Structure Key Components

Component 1: Strategic Priority Areas (referred to as Lines of Action)

A Line of Action (LOA) is a dedicated strategic priority area of the CoC. These priority areas centralize and coordinate the CoC's efforts. LOAs focus on issues that require stakeholder involvement, address complex problems, and require a significant amount of system change. LOAs may also be established in response to large amounts of new resources or focused attention which requires a coordinated response. LOAs can only be successful with broad CoC input and leadership.

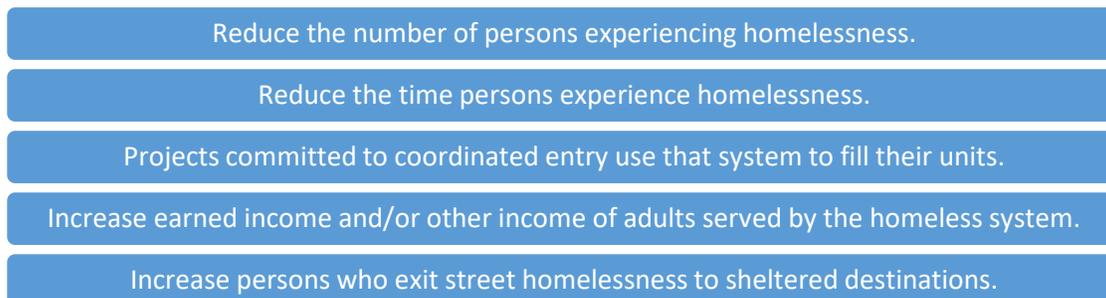
Each LOA has one or two dedicated project managers to support the work, as well as a Leadership Team that establishes a work plan. It is the goal of All Chicago to maintain current workplans for each LOA on the [CoC webpage](#).

For additional information about the current Lines of Action, see Appendix A.

Component 2: CoC System Goals

The CoC identified system Goals in 2018 to establish high-level aims shared by the CoC's diverse contributors in their efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Prior to the System Goals, the CoC, did not have a formal method of measuring system-wide outcomes. As part of the development of CoC System Goals, the CoC reviewed the [HUD System Performance Measures](#) and discussed what metrics were meaningful locally. The outcome was a set of locally identified goals referred to as the System Goals. The System Goals drive the selection of strategic priority areas and Lines of Action.

The CoC's five goals noted in the chart below are tracked using data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).



For additional information about System Goals and the CoC's performance, visit the [CoC webpage](#).

Component 3: Intentional Opportunities for Influence and Action

The CoC IS activities (outlined below) have two purposes: they are opportunities to learn about how you/your organization/your sector can support the CoC in achieving its plans and goals; they are also opportunities for you/your organization/your sector to influence how the CoC achieves its plans and goals. The CoC IS's primary opportunities for influence and action are outlined below. However, additional arise throughout the year in the form of surveys, CoC Board public comment opportunities, participation in Affinity Groups, and more.

Leadership Team Meetings

Each LOA has a Leadership Team made up of stakeholders that guide the development of the LOA workplan and make decisions and recommendations on activities within the LOA. This is the primary way people with lived experience, CoC stakeholders and members, and Affinity Groups can influence the outcomes and priorities of activities within the LOA.

For additional information on Leadership Teams, see Appendix B.

Quarterly Strategy Sessions

Quarterly strategy sessions bring together stakeholders within the CoC IS to discuss LOAs, progress on System Goals, and opportunities on the horizon. These sessions are the primary opportunity for Affinity Groups and stakeholders to influence and shape the direction of the overall CoC IS, including the sunseting of existing strategic priority areas (LOAs) or adoption of new strategic priority areas (LOAs).

For additional information and to view the 2022 Quarterly Strategy Session meeting schedule, see Appendix C.

Component 4: Meeting Structure, Facilitation, and Decision- Making Processes

In 2021, All Chicago held a series of CoC conversations to establish improved practices related to the CoC IS meeting structure, the way meetings are facilitated, and how decisions are made. The resulting framework for how decisions are made and how meetings are carried out within the CoC IS (including how information is shared before, during, and after the meeting), is outlined in Appendix D.

CoC Implementation Structure Roles and Responsibilities

The CoC IS is comprised of work done on behalf of, and in partnership with, the CoC. Each group and individual has a distinct role and responsibility to support the success of the CoC IS. Information about these responsibilities is outlined below.

CoC Board of Directors

The CoC Board of Directors' responsibilities are outlined in the CoC Charter, which states that the CoC Board is responsible for the CoC IS. The Executive Committee of the Board oversee the activities of the CoC IS.

All Chicago

One of the hallmarks of a successfully implemented collective impact model is the existence of a strong backbone agency. As a Collaborative Applicant, with the associated requirement to provide staff to run the CoC IS, All Chicago is the backbone agency for the CoC.

Backbone Agencies typically conduct the following activities:

1. Guide vision and strategy
2. Support aligned activities
3. Establish shared measurement practices
4. Build public will
5. Advance policy
6. Mobilize funding

Within these activities, the backbone agency – in this case, All Chicago – also manages the logistics and communications to ensure smooth operations of all parts of the collective impact structure.

The day-to-day work of the CoC IS is managed by two lead project managers from All Chicago; they ensure the CoC IS processes are facilitated successfully and contribute expertise and leadership. This work entails activities such as:

- Ensuring each LOA has a leadership team that oversees the strategic direction and prioritizes associated activities; ensuring that work plans are clear, public, and current; and providing guidance to project managers to integrate across other CoC IS activities and impact system goals.
- Ensuring the board is engaged with the CoC within each LOA and the CoC IS overall.
- Meeting with stakeholders to address concerns or identify opportunities to expand efforts.
- Managing the flow of key CoC activities, including helping to identify when changes to the CoC IS are needed, or when a CoC Board policy decision is required.

Line of Action Leadership Teams

Each LOA will have a Leadership Team that:

- Provides guidance for the LOA by giving input and direction to shape the LOA's activities, goals, and measures success.
- Assists with challenge areas and leverages their contacts and networks to help solve complex problems that may arise within the LOA.
- Promotes CoC engagement with the LOA by acting as a champion for, and a liaison between, the LOA and other CoC Committees, workgroups, and Affinity Groups they are a part of.

For additional information on Leadership Teams, See Appendix B.

Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups typically form around shared concern for a specific population, around organizations doing similar work, or around connections with other systems. Affinity Groups work together to address shared needs and concerns within the CoC and help identify burgeoning needs in the community. Their work may include:

- Addressing priority areas or engaging stakeholders
- Piloting system refinements
- Identifying shared questions or concerns to raise within the CoC such as highlighting the need for population-specific housing models or supportive services.

Affinity Groups work in partnership with the CoC to accomplish the System Goals. CoC members or stakeholders staff these groups. Each Affinity Group has a designated All Chicago staff liaison to answer questions and ensure the group is connected within and across the CoC IS. Affinity Groups may also have regular meetings with the IS lead project managers. While the All Chicago liaison consistently participates in Affinity Group meetings, they do not coordinate or run the group.

For additional information about Affinity Groups, see Appendix E. See also the CoC [Affinity Group page](#) on the All Chicago website.

People with Lived Experience

People with lived experience help direct and drive the work of the CoC IS. They meet in cohort groups, through the Lived Experience Commission (LEC) and Youth Action Board (YAB), and play integral roles in all other aspects of the CoC IS. Both the LEC and YAB have established decision-making structures and membership responsibilities. They have representatives who serve on the CoC Board and on all LOA Leadership Teams. They are also supported in their work by All Chicago staff.

CoC Members

All stakeholders interested in helping prevent and end homelessness should become CoC Members. CoC members play a critical role in the CoC IS. In addition to being part of the Leadership Teams and Affinity Groups, all CoC members and stakeholders should stay informed and engaged through participation in meetings, CoC conversations, feedback sessions, and surveys.

For additional information about CoC Membership Roles, see Appendix F.

Lead Agencies

Lead agencies perform official duties on behalf of the CoC to support Chicago's relationship with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This work is governed by Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the CoC Board of Directors. The MOU outlines the roles, responsibilities, and accountability structures for each lead agency, and are approved by the full CoC membership.

A separate MOU establishes the Lead Agency organization and oversight committee for each of the following areas:

- Collaborative Applicant with All Chicago serving as the Lead Agency, working with the Collaborative Applicant Subcommittee (a CoC Board Committee)
- Coordinated Entry (CE), with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) serving as the Lead Agency, working with the Coordinated Entry Leadership Group. Note that CSH informed the CoC Board they will be stepping back from this role in November 2022. The CoC established a CE Lead Agency Selection Committee to identify a new CE Lead Agency.
- HMIS, with All Chicago serving as the Lead Agency, working with HUD TA to establish a governance and committee structure for oversight.

For additional information on Lead Agencies, view the [CoC Memoranda of Understanding](#) page on All Chicago's website.

Appendices

- A. Lines of Action
- B. CoC IS Leadership Team Guidelines
- C. 2022 CoC IS Strategy Session Schedule and Agendas
- D. Meeting Structure, Facilitation, and Decision Making
- E. Affinity Groups
- F. CoC member Roles – Getting Involved
- G. Leadership Team Commitment Form

Appendix A - Lines of Action

Overview

Lines of Action (LOAs) are the CoC's strategic priority areas. LOAs may be needed if one or more of the following criteria are met:

- The CoC and/or CoC Board has identified a need around a particular topic.
- There is enough CoC mobilization around a pressing issue that can be solved with a lot of intentional work by the CoC.
- Without creating a LOA, the CoC is at risk of not tackling the issue.
- The topic is something that can be addressed through a time-limited work plan.
- There is an All Chicago or partner agency member that can dedicate 40% FTE to project manage the LOA.
- Without a LOA, necessary partners might not interact or work together.
- The work intentionally advances the CoC's strategic priorities.
- New resources may be coming for activities in the LOA.

LOAs are accountable to the CoC Board Executive Committee, which brings items to the full CoC Board as it determines necessary. Each LOA is staffed by one to two project managers and led by a Leadership Team that shapes the work plan and establishes ad hoc workgroups to support implementation.

Leadership Teams reflect broad stakeholder perspectives and help the LOA project managers determine the best path for accomplishing strategic objectives. Leadership Teams are established using the Leadership Team Composition framework, and the Leadership Team itself will review membership and conduct recruitment efforts if needed. While LOA Leadership Team meetings and ad hoc workgroups are open to anyone in the CoC to attend, only designated members participate in share decision-making for the LOA.

Changes to the LOA will occur in response to CoC input, completed workplans, or topics no longer meeting the criteria outlined above. The CoC IS Lead Project Managers will propose needed changes to the Executive Committee of the Board.

At any time, a member of the CoC can submit a request in writing to the CoC IS Lead Project Managers and the CoC Board Executive Committee to propose a new LOA for consideration.

2022 Lines of Action

The following topics were determined by CoC input through focus groups and a survey, CoC Board conversations, and support from the current CoC IS project managers. These topics reflect the CoC's current strategic priorities. They will likely be in place for the next few years. In each LOA, we will center the needs of the subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness, and honor the fact that people are complex and rarely fit into one group. This allows a more integrated approach to subpopulations, with multiple LOAs working together to provide support instead of single LOAs dedicated to specific groups of people.

- Employment and Income
- Expedited Housing Initiative
- Housing Access
- Racial Equity
- System Analysis and Resource Development
- System Front Door

Additional information about each Line of Action can be found on the [CoC Implementation Structure webpage](#).

Appendix B – CoC IS Leadership Team Guidelines

Leadership Team Purpose:

Each Line of Action (LOA) will have a Leadership Team that:

- Provides leadership for the LOA by giving input and direction to shape the LOA's priority activities, goals, and measures of success.
- Assists with challenge areas and leverages their contacts and networks to help solve complex problems that may arise within the LOA.
- Promotes community engagement with the LOA by acting as a champion for, and a liaison, between the LOA and other CoC Committees, workgroups, and constituencies they are a part of.

Leadership team members will be required to sign a Leadership Team Commitment Form annually. Furthermore, Leadership team members must:

- Be an individual CoC Member or be associated with an agency that is a CoC Member.
- Attend all meetings and prioritize this role among their other obligations.
- Commit for at least one year.
- Prepare for meetings by reviewing materials ahead of time.
- Function as a representative of the sector/affinity group, rather than their individual organization, while also contributing to system change efforts. This may require added time in between meetings to share information and gather input from colleagues.
- Be a champion of the LOA and serve as a liaison to other CoC committees, workgroups, and constituencies.

Leadership Team Meeting Schedule

Leadership Teams typically meet no more than monthly and no less frequently than quarterly.

Leadership Team Requirements and Expectations

- All Leadership Team meetings are open meetings. Meeting information will be posted on the CoC Events Calendar and shared on Slack.com in the appropriate channel.
- Attendees will have an opportunity for questions during open discussion. If topics are raised that are not on the agenda or relevant to the LOA area of focus, whether by attendees or members, these will be tabled to a "parking lot" to ensure that the meeting remains on the topic at hand.

Leadership Team Decision Making Process

- Decision making will occur through a process of allowing topics to be raised by project managers or Leadership Team members, pros and cons discussed, and then an opportunity will be explicitly given to raise any opposition to a building collective decision.
- Often, decisions are made through consensus. Should there be no clear consensus, voting may be used to document the decision, as well as any dissenting opinions.
- Discussions on decision-making items (and if necessary, voting) will be limited to members of the Leadership Team who have been consistent attendees.
 - Decisions about who is eligible to vote at a given meeting will be made by the Leadership Team in reflection of the cadence of meetings. E.g., if the Leadership Team only meets quarterly, it may not be relevant if members attended the prior meeting, but a topic that is discussed over two consecutive monthly meetings may be limited to those in attendance at both meetings.

Leadership Team Tools

CoC IS Templates promote continuity, enhanced CoC engagement, and streamlined processes for Lines of Action.

Templates for Leadership Teams include:

- Workplan
- Slide Deck
- Agenda
- Meeting Notes

Leadership Team Composition

Leadership Teams will be composed of the following groups below, for a total of 15-25 people. No Leadership Team member should sit on more than one Leadership Team. The LOA Project Managers are responsible for assembling the Leadership Team, and the Leadership Team itself will review membership and conduct recruitment efforts if needed. Any CoC members can reach out to the LOA Project Managers for questions or concerns about Leadership Team Compositions.

Composition Categories:

- People with Lived Experience
 - Up to two members from the Lived Experience Commission.
 - Up to two members from the Youth Action Board.
 - Up to two other people with lived experience not affiliated with the above groups.
- Service Providers
 - Each Affinity Group may select one person to represent their Affinity Group on the Leadership Team. This may be a service provider.
 - LOA Project Managers may recruit one additional provider if expertise in the LOA focus area is not yet present.
 - Affinity Groups may be provided guidance on the type of provider to propose (e.g., youth provider who does emergency services or family provider that does rapid rehousing) to ensure that there is a diversity of provider expertise and population of focus and that no one type of provider dominates the Leadership Team.
- CoC Board Members
 - Ideally this role would be covered by one of the other composition categories.
 - Project Managers may recruit one Board Member if Board Members are not reflected in the Leadership Team through other avenues.
- City Partners
 - Each city department can identify one person representing that department to participate in the Leadership Team.
 - Ideally at least one city department representative will join each Leadership Team.
- Other System Leads / At Large Members
 - Other system lead roles and/or at large members may be recruited, including people from:
 - The CoC's Lead Agencies (Collaborative Applicant, HMIS, Coordinated Entry).
 - Organizations that serve other system functions or operate system programs.
 - Other Lines of Action.
 - Chicago Funders Together to End Homelessness.
 - Research Partners.

Appendix C – Quarterly Strategy Session Schedule and Agenda

Meeting Purpose

As part of the CoC Implementation Structure, the CoC IS PMs convene CoC Lead Agencies, Lines of Action Project Managers and Leadership Team Members, CoC Board Members, People with Lived Experience, and Affinity Group Leaders on a quarterly basis to discuss progress toward system goals and opportunities on the horizon.

This is the primary way that all these groups are brought together across Lines of Action to discuss the CoC Implementation Structure's impact on system goals, priority areas, and needs.

Pre-Meeting Guiding Questions for Participants to Consider

These questions will be used to guide the open discussion conversation in each CoC IS Quarterly Strategy Session. They are meant to help representatives who attend the Quarterly Strategy Sessions come prepared.

- Looking at our [CoC System Goals](#), what things do you see agencies or our system doing that is positively impacting progress? What opportunities are we not leveraging to positively impact progress? What barriers do we face?
- Are there other things the CoC needs to be focusing on to impact progress?
- Are there things the CoC Lead Agencies (Collaborative Applicant, HMIS, Coordinated Entry) should be doing more of, differently, or less of to impact our system goals?
- Are there things the CoC Board should do?
- Are there things agencies should do?

2022 Meeting Schedule

These meetings are scheduled on the first Thursday of the last month of each quarter. The 2022 schedule is listed below.

- Thursday, March 3, 2022 - 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
- Thursday, June 2, 2022 – 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
- Thursday, September 1, 2022 – 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
- Thursday, December 1, 2022 – 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Proposed Standard Meeting Topics

Note, proposed topics may change depending on CoC system needs or at the request of parties within the CoC Implementation Structure. All Strategy Session attendees can request a topic be put on the table by emailing Nicole Bahena before the meeting, or by proposing it at the beginning of the meeting. Those in attendance can speak in favor of or in opposition to the addition of that topic. The goal would be to achieve consensus on the agenda before starting the meeting.

- Review any updates and information on System Goal data, or data from Lines of Action.
- Share prior and upcoming decision-making points within Line of Action Leadership Teams.
- Open discussion using guiding questions (see above).
- Are the current Lines of Action the right ones? Are new ones needed? Are there initiatives on the horizon the CoC should be joining or participating in; and if so, where do those fall within the CoC IS?
- Wrap-up and Next Steps: how to share what happened in this meeting with our groups.

Appendix D – Meeting Structure, Facilitation, and Decision-Making Processes

Overview

This document provides an overview of the CoC Implementation Structure Meeting Structure for meetings that are officially part of the CoC IS, including:

- Leadership Team Meetings
- Quarterly Strategy Sessions
- CoC Conversations

Project Manager Role

The CoC IS has multiple project managers to help facilitate the work of the CoC IS. Both the overall CoC IS, and each Line of Action, have two project managers.

Line of Action project managers:

- Ensure alignment between the LOA and the goals and priorities of the CoC.
- Lead and support the work of the Line of Action.
- Participate in the CoC Quarterly Strategy Sessions and CoC conversations.
- Manage the LOA work plan and use data to understand progress or pivot opportunities.
- Work with the Leadership Team to ensure active participation and communication.

The CoC IS overall project managers play a lead role in planning, executing, monitoring, and making progress on CoC IS activities. In addition to ensuring that the LOA project managers complete the items above, the CoC IS project managers also:

- Oversee the CoC IS administration.
- Ensure alignment between all LOAs and the goals and priorities of the CoC IS.
- Guide the efforts of the LOA project managers.
- Facilitate the CoC Quarterly Strategy Sessions and CoC conversations.
- Synthesize across work plans and relevant data to understand progress or pivot opportunities.
- Support communication throughout the CoC IS and CoC as a whole.

Project managers are the primary people charged with facilitating meetings within the CoC IS and will work to follow the guidelines established here.

Agenda Setting

Agendas for each Leadership Team meeting are created by the LOA project managers in reflection of ongoing Leadership Teamwork. Draft agendas are sent to Leadership Team members ideally one week prior so Leadership Team members can propose additions to the agenda. The agenda will be finalized by the Leadership Team consensus at the beginning of the meeting. Anticipated decisions within the agenda will be marked accordingly for easy identification by Leadership Team members and others interested in the Line of Action's work. The proposed agenda will also be posted on Slack.com in the dedicated Line of Action channel.

Meeting Facilitation

In 2022, the CoC Implementation Structure Project Managers will participate in meeting facilitation training to enhance meeting effectiveness. Additionally, project managers will continue to focus on establishing clear framing about when decisions are being made and who has the authority to make decisions. More information on decision-making is outlined below.

Through this, project managers will work to:

- Clarify the roles of meeting participants and facilitators.
- Improve engagement and participation in meetings.
- Hold members accountable for participation.
- Clearly define and explain meeting goals, decisions, and progress.

Leadership Team meetings will begin by reviewing prior decisions made by the group, as well as known upcoming decisions. Meeting facilitators will use the tools available to them to encourage participation from all LT members. Topics raised in the meeting that are not connected directly to the discussion item at hand will be added to a parking lot.

The meeting will conclude with a summary of takeaways and decisions made in the meeting, as well as a reminder to LT members to share this information with their constituencies in between meetings.

Post-Meeting Items

Meeting notes will be circulated after the meeting, ideally within 7 business days. Notes will highlight key decisions and next steps for easy reference. Notes will also be shared on [Slack.com](https://www.slack.com) in the dedicated Line of Action channel.

Decision-Making Within the CoC Implementation Structure

Within a CoC as large as Chicago, no one stakeholder can know when, where or how all decisions are made. That said, all CoC IS stakeholders, including CoC IS project managers, should strive to understand the types of decisions and decision-making processes within the system.

Types of Decisions

Decisions can generally be categorized as one of the following types. Examples from the CoC IS and related authorities are included as well.

Decision Type	Decision Description	CoC IS Examples	CoC IS Authority
Strategic Decisions	Decisions that have a long-term impact, and/or involve large-scale resources or policy decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a new LOA • Setting a new CoC policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoC Board of Directors • LOA Leadership Teams
Tactical Decisions	Decisions that have a medium-term impact and/or are about how to achieve a set strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pausing AMEs during the RRH case manager shortage • Approving workplans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOA Leadership Teams • CoC Board Committees and Subcommittees • CoC Lead Agencies (per MOU) • CoC IS Project Managers
Operational Decisions	Decisions that have a short-term impact, and/or are routine and necessary to make progress toward the tactical and strategic goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When to schedule meetings • What and when recommendations go to the Leadership Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoC Lead Agencies • Work Groups • Affinity Groups • CoC IS Project Managers

Decision-Making Process

In general, decision-making follows a typical cycle:

- Problem identification and definition.
- Decision identification.
- Decision choice.
- Decision activation

This cycle can be applied to strategic, tactical, or operational decisions. The authority to make decisions depends on the decision type and how urgently the decision must be made. **All CoC members are encouraged to ask what decisions need to be made and who has the authority to make them in all meetings when it is not already identified.**

Problem Identification and Definition

Oftentimes, the reason a Line of Action, Work Group, or other focus area is created in the CoC IS is because CoC members have raised it repeatedly as an issue, and/or data is showing that a significant problem exists. Through assigning a problem to a CoC group, that CoC group can further research and define the problem.

Example: In late 2021, CoC data showed that utilization of permanent supportive housing (PSH) was close to the CoC goal of 80% overall, but that even so, over 1,000 units of PSH were open. This resulted in several feedback sessions with PSH providers, and a CoC Board motion to create the Housing Access Line of Access.

This is a key opportunity area for influencing the direction and outcome of a decision. Affinity Groups, Leadership Teams, People with Lived Experience, and others must recognize their contributions to conversations about problems as critical ways to move the CoC's work forward.

Decision Identification

Sometimes identifying what decision needs to be made is clear from the outset of the problem identification and definition stage. Other times, conversations among stakeholders lead to decision identification. While the CoC IS project managers strive to identify what upcoming decisions will need to be made to advance the Line of Action's work, at times, decision identification happens organically during a meeting.

Example 1 (pre-planned decision identification): The Expedited Housing Initiative (EHI) Line of Action Project Managers brought a proposal that is being considered by the Leadership Team. They are considering whether the CoC should continue exploring the use of progressive engagement beyond EHI, and for the entire CoC. They met and discussed the topic for 3 meetings and will decide what approach the CoC should take on this topic.

Example 2 (unplanned decision identification; in the meeting): The EHI Leadership Team was exploring barriers and long lengths of time for people to transfer from an EHI Rapid Rehousing project to a CoC-funded Permanent Supportive Housing project. Data provided in the meeting led the Leadership Team to decide to ask the Coordinated Entry Leadership Team to consider opportunities for reducing barriers during the transfer process.

All CoC IS participants and CoC members are responsible for holding each other accountable to identify when and who has the authority to make decisions. To aid in this, project managers will end each meeting by summarizing the key discussion points, decisions that were made, or decisions anticipated in the future. CoC IS stakeholders should also help identify decision-making opportunities by contributing to these conversations and asking questions.

Decision Choice

This part of the decision process is typically referred to as making a decision. Who has the authority to make a decision within the CoC IS depends largely on what decision category it lies in and its urgency.

Example: The CoC Board decided to ask the city to set aside 1,000 slots of a basic income program for people experiencing homelessness. If the decision was not urgent, the CoC Board may have preferred to hold conversations with other stakeholders to identify the appropriate number to request, as well as how the CoC might refer to those slots. However, because the decision was urgent, the Board moved forward with the request without additional feedback.

CoC IS stakeholders play a critical role in making decisions, especially those that sit on the CoC IS Leadership Teams and CoC Board.

Decision Activation

Just because a decision is made does not mean it will be put into play. To ensure decisions move forward, CoC IS stakeholders can work with the CoC IS Project Managers to answer the following questions:

- What do people have to know about my decision?
- What action must be taken to ensure that I reach the desired outcome?
- Who must take this action?
- What must be done so the person who takes the action can do it properly?

Example: The CoC Board Executive Committee authorized the creation of a Housing Access Line of Action in April 2022. To activate this decision, All Chicago and the CoC Executive Committee put the following actions into play:

- *The CoC Board, CoC Implementation Structure Lines of Action Leadership Teams, and the CoC need to know this Line of Action will be standing up.*
- *All Chicago will recruit representatives to sit on the new Line of Action Leadership Team so the workplan can be finalized, and work can be prioritized.*
- *All Chicago as the CoC Implementation Structure Lead Agency is the one authorized to take these actions to stand up to the Housing Access Line of Action.*
- *All Chicago must dedicate a staff person to lead these activities.*

CoC IS stakeholders play a critical role in making others aware when a decision has been made.

Appendix E – Affinity Groups

Overview

In 2019, the Continuum of Care adopted the Implementation Structure (IS), formerly known as the Action Agenda, to enact the strategic vision of the CoC. Review the full 2021 CoC Implementation Structure Guide here (link).

The IS fosters collaboration and communication while allowing the CoC to engage in targeted decision-making. It spurs action, innovation, and implementation, making the continuum more responsive than a long-term strategic plan. The IS supports a regular review of data to track progress toward preventing and ending homelessness and responding to the CoC's immediate needs.

Affinity Groups are one of the key components of the 2021 CoC Implementation Structure, along with People with Lived Experience, Lead Agencies, and Lines of Action.

[Affinity Groups](#) typically form around a shared concern for a specific population, around organizations doing similar work, or around connections with other systems. Affinity groups work in partnership with the CoC to accomplish the system goals of preventing and ending homelessness in Chicago.

Their work may include:

- Addressing priority areas or engaging stakeholders.
- Piloting system refinements; and/or
- Identifying shared questions or concerns to raise within the CoC, highlighting the need for population-specific housing models or supportive services.

Affinity Groups work in partnership with the CoC to accomplish the system goals of preventing and ending homelessness in Chicago. CoC members or stakeholders staff them. Each Affinity Group has a designated All Chicago staff liaison to answer questions and ensure the group's visibility within and across the CoC IS. Affinity Groups may also have regular meetings with the IS lead project managers. While the All Chicago liaison consistently participates in Affinity Group meetings, they do not coordinate or run the groups.

Affinity Groups are not staffed by All Chicago, allowing CoC members to coordinate all aspects of the group. Affinity Groups establish the structures and norms for the group, decision-making processes, and membership responsibilities to support the group's work. The CoC IS Lead Project Managers will hold strategy sessions twice a year that invite Affinity Group leaders, Lead Agency Project Managers, and LOA Project Managers to discuss progress toward system goals and upcoming opportunities. These biennial meetings will assess current Lines of Action, work plans, and transitions for LOAs and Affinity Groups.

Why Form an Affinity Group

- Affinity Groups allow you to voice concerns about specific issues you are enthusiastic about and can help shape the work of the entire system.
- Affinity Groups can give groups purpose and connect back to a larger, collective strategy.
- Affinity Groups are invited to send members to CoC IS Strategy Sessions that allow the entire CoC to reflect on accomplishments and set goals and strategies for the future.
- Other tenants of the CoC IS (LOAs, workgroups, and leadership teams) will pull from Affinity Groups for representation.

Affinity Group Accountability

Affinity Groups are broadly accountable to the CoC and the CoC Implementation Structure and should focus on actions that contribute to the system-level work of the entire CoC, not just the interests of the group. No single entity is designed to hold Affinity Groups accountable, but CoC IS Lead Project Managers and anyone in the CoC IS can raise the

issue of accountability to the CoC Executive Committee if needed.

Affinity Group Leaders should work with the Group to hold accountability exercises where the group can regularly reflect on these questions:

- Are our activities helping the CoC IS progress toward its system goals?
- Are we working toward goals as a group that are improving our homeless system?
- Are we helping the CoC learn something that could contribute to new ideas and/or improved progress toward system goals?
- Are we actively helping shape the CoC IS, Lines of Action, and/or Lead Agency work in a way that benefits people experiencing homelessness?

Affinity Group Criteria

To be considered part of the CoC Implementation Structure, Affinity Groups [must register with the CoC Lead Agency \(All Chicago\)](#). Affinity Groups should appoint one person to register the group. To be invited to the biennial strategy sessions, CoC Affinity Groups must be registered and held at least one meeting in the month prior to the session. Affinity Groups must:

- Have designated lead(s) of the group that serves as the primary Point of Contact for other CoC members looking to join.
- Accept CoC members (Affinity Groups may stipulate guidelines for membership).
- Have an established purpose or goals with activities that are clearly tied to the CoC System Goals.
- And convene at least every other month.

Affinity Group Registration

Affinity Groups Registration and approval is reviewed and approved as part of the CoC IS by the CoC Implementation Structure Lead Project Managers and CoC Board Chair. If additional guidance is needed about the Affinity Group joining the CoC IS, the request will be brought to the Executive Committee of the Board. If needed, Affinity Group candidates can request to meet directly with the Executive Committee. Interested parties should [apply through the online survey](#).

Appendix F – CoC Member Roles

Staying Informed about the CoC IS

All Chicago, as part of its role as Collaborative Applicant, supports several communication channels to support members of the CoC to stay informed about the CoC IS. These include:

- Maintaining a CoC website and events calendar.
- Publishing CoC IS news via e-newsletters on a regular basis.
- Maintaining a Slack.com channel to promote interaction and information sharing for everyone in the CoC.

The CoC IS relies on participation from members throughout the continuum. CoC members are encouraged to follow committee activities. Meeting dates and times can be found on the [CoC Calendar](#), and meeting notes are posted on the [CoC's Slack.com channel](#). Voting may be limited to Leadership Teams, but all meetings are open to all CoC members. For ad-hoc workgroups or other one-time meetings, information will be shared through Slack and the CoC website.

Scheduling regular meetings of all staff at your agency to promote cross-team communication throughout the CoC IS can better connect direct service staff with the larger system goals of preventing and ending homelessness. Agencies are strongly encouraged to discuss their contributions to CoC conversations and the CoC IS overall.

On a quarterly basis, All Chicago hosts a CoC IS webinar to learn and share information about the CoC IS. This webinar will overlap with the biannual CoC Membership meetings, when possible, to support CoC participation. All Chicago and the CoC IS Lead Project Managers will broadly communicate opportunities for engaging in the Lines of Action. To the extent that Affinity Groups provide information about engagement opportunities to All Chicago, All Chicago will also share those with the CoC. CoC members with other ideas about communication can email cocprograms@allchicago.org.

Engaging with the CoC IS

CoC members are encouraged to actively engage with the CoC IS. As the CoC IS is built on the foundation of a Collective Impact model, deep member engagement is critical to help the CoC achieve its system goals. Engagement includes both staying informed, but also actively involving members of your organization in the CoC IS. Opportunities for doing this will be broadcast via the CoC newsletter, Slack, and posted on the CoC's website. These opportunities for engagement include:

- Joining a CoC Implementation Structure Leadership Team or workgroup.
- Joining a CoC Board Committee.
- Join an Affinity Group.
- Attend CoC Board Meetings.
- Attending CoC webinars and All CoC Meetings.

Additionally, each agency should ensure that inter-agency communication is happening about the CoC IS, Affinity Groups, and the CoC Board.

Sharing feedback is another way CoC Members can shape the direction of the CoC. Throughout the year, there are both formal and informal ways feedback is collected, and these opportunities will be broadcast via the newsletter, Slack, and posted on the CoC's website. At any time, CoC Members can email cocprograms@allchicago.org with any questions, concerns, or ideas.

Appendix G – CoC IS Leadership Team Member Commitment Form

Each Line of Action Leadership Team Member should sign this commitment form annually.

Overview

The CoC has established priority areas called Lines of Action. Each Line of Action has a Leadership Team made up of key stakeholders and representatives.

Leadership Team members:

- Provide guidance for the Line of Action by giving input and direction to shape the Line of Action’s vision, priority activities, goals, and measures of success.
- Assist with challenge areas and leverage their contacts and networks to help solve complex problems that may arise within the Line of Action.
- Promote CoC engagement with the Line by acting as a champion for, and a liaison between the Line of Action and other CoC Committees, Workgroups, and constituencies they are a part of.

Leadership Team Member Requirements and Expectations

Leadership team members must commit to the following:

- Review the CoC Implementation Structure Guidebook annually.
- Be an individual CoC Member or be associated with an agency that is a CoC Member.
- Attend all meetings and prioritize this role among their other obligations.
- Commit for at least one year.
- Prepare for meetings by reviewing data and documents ahead of time.
- Act as a representative of the sector/affinity group, rather than their individual organization, while also contributing to system change efforts. This may require added time in between meetings to share information and gather input from colleagues.
- Be a champion of the Line of Action and serve as a liaison to other CoC committees, workgroups, and constituencies.

Personal Commitment

I, _____ agree to be a Leadership Team member on the _____ Line of Action, and will work diligently to carry out the above mentioned Leadership Team member duties.

I can serve as a liaison between this Line of Action and the following CoC committees, workgroups, affinity groups, and/or constituencies:

Leadership Team Member Name

Date