



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD CONTINUUM OF CARE HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDER NETWORK (HSPN)



Governance Bylaws - Established February 2003;
Amended March 21, 2013 and August 18, 2016

ARTICLE I: INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE and MISSION

Section 1.0: Introduction

The City of New Bedford coordinates a comprehensive response to homelessness through an organized Continuum of Care process. This Continuum of Care [CoC] is rooted in the City's Homeless Service Providers' Network (HSPN), a collective of community organizations, agencies, and individuals committed to working together to end homelessness.

New Bedford's CoC encompasses the entire range of services and housing needed to prevent and eliminate homelessness in the City. The HSPN, as the CoC's membership component, works to create a strategic and efficient system that includes preventative services, emergency shelters and permanent housing.

To support these efforts on an annual basis, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issues a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) that competitively seeks applications for Continuum of Care for permanent housing for persons who are experiencing homelessness according to HUD definitions and meet the eligibility criteria and priorities as defined within CoC's written standards as amended. This NOFA requires evidence that the Continuum of Care coordinates a community-driven strategic approach relying on a series of performance targets that will ultimately lead to the elimination of homelessness within the CoC. As the HSPN regularly meets and works on issues, strategies, and active solutions from its membership in addressing homelessness, the City of New Bedford, through its Continuum, has successfully applied for and received HUD funding since 1996.

These bylaws have been developed in order to minimize questions of procedure, expectation, and responsibility within the HSPN, thereby ensuring that the work of the HSPN remains on target and focused on the product and its substance in the future.

Section 1.1: Purpose

The HSPN is the membership component of the City of New Bedford's Continuum of Care for outreach to vulnerable populations and to ensure the movement of those individuals and families through a compassionate system of housing and support into permanent independent housing. In so doing, the HSPN strives to:

- 1) Provide a network which shares ideas, concerns, and resources applicable to homeless issues and to foster collaboration in addressing the needs of the homeless;
- 2) Increase community awareness and dialogue as to precipitators of homelessness, the needs of those experiencing homelessness and ways to strategically end homelessness in this community.
- 3) Participate actively in state and local advocacy for homeless issues. It does so by adhering to its mission statement, which was revised and adopted by the membership in 2003.

Section 1.2: Mission Statement

"To advocate on behalf of homeless individuals and families by enlisting the cooperation of homeless providers and organizations, to improve the accessibility of existing public resources, to maintain statistical data on the homeless population, and to provide supportive services and empowerment strategies to allow these individuals and families to be

integrated into the community through a compassionate continuum of care system. The HSPN is committed to the concept that each person is entitled to live in dignity.”

Section 1.3: Responsibilities

- 1) Continuum of Care Planning – The HSPN, acting through its administrative agent, New Bedford’s Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development, ensures the implementation and coordination of a housing and service system that encompasses the following:
 - Outreach, engagement, and assessment;
 - Shelter, housing, and supportive services;
 - Prevention strategies
- 2) Point-in-Time Count – The HSPN conducts at least a biennially point-in-time count of homeless persons within the Continuum of Care
- 3) Gaps Analysis – The HSPN conducts a periodic gaps analysis of the homeless needs and services available within the Continuum of Care
- 4) Consolidated Plan – The City of New Bedford’s Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development, in its role as the CoC administrator and collaborative applicant, will solicit input from the HSPN relating to the homeless needs assessment and homeless facilities components of the Consolidated Plan
- 5) Emergency Solutions Grant Consultation – The HSPN will consult with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of New Bedford’s Emergency Solutions Grants program on the city’s plan for allocating Emergency Solutions Grants program funds and reporting and evaluating the performance of Emergency Solutions Grants program recipients
- 6) Preparing an application for funds - The City of New Bedford’s Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development is recognized as the HUD Collaborative Applicant and is responsible for overseeing the HSPN’s development of applications and the approval and submission of applications in response to a NOFA published by HUD annually
- 7) Other tasks and projects as identified

Article II: Members and Membership Meetings

The HSPN membership is open to organizations including those state and local agencies, public housing authorities, non-profit organizations, business entities, legal /law enforcement, faith-based organizations, developers, educational, victim service providers, school districts, mental health agencies, hospitals and medical communities, organizations that serve veterans, homeless and formerly homeless individuals and other related organizations, community groups and interested citizens that are part of the City’s Continuum of Care and are involved in anticipating, addressing, working with and remediating homelessness and its precipitating factors within New Bedford.

Interested individuals or organizations may obtain a Membership Application from the HSPN’s website or through the HSPN Administrative Agent (the City’s Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development). New members must be approved by the HSPN Executive Committee at a regularly scheduled Executive Committee Meeting. Each member organization shall have one vote in HSPN business.

In addition to these organizations, the HSPN also invites individuals who are either currently, or have previously experienced homelessness, to participate as members; although in order to ensure privacy and confidentiality, the HSPN does not maintain a roster of such names unless given the authority to do so by the individual.

Governing Rules of Order: Unless otherwise specified by these bylaws, the HSPN will be governed by Robert's Rules of Order. Meetings of the HSPN are public meetings and are open to all, whether or not they are a member.

Section 2.0: Levels of Membership

Only active members are given a voice in the decision-making process for issues brought before the HSPN (affording one vote per member organization and homeless consumer on issues requiring a vote). Such issues may include the identification of homeless needs and prioritization of projects for the annual Continuum of Care application. Active membership also allows organizations access to federal homelessness funds received from HUD and administered by the City of New Bedford Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development; only HSPN members in good standing may qualify to submit proposals for HUD funding.

Section 2.1: Membership Agreement

The HSPN Membership Agreement is an annually signed pledge of commitment to participate in the HSPN and serves as the basis of voting membership in the network. Membership agreements should be distributed, executed, and returned to the HSPN Chair or designee. Membership is held either by an organization, agency or office (rather than individually by employees or members of those entities) and is also held individually only by those who are, or formerly were, homeless or in other circumstances as may be determined by the HSPN Executive Committee. In order to retain the privilege of being a voting member, an organization or homeless consumer must maintain active membership in the HSPN.

Section 2.1.1: Member

A member is any organization matching the above criteria who agrees to the obligations and privileges of being a member of the HSPN. Such agreement is formalized by completing and signing a Membership Agreement. Attendance at seventy-five percent (75%) of the regular monthly HSPN meetings is encouraged. An organization is defined as a provider of services to assist homeless persons toward self-sufficiency. An organization that provides funding for homeless services is also eligible for membership.

Section 2.1.2: Non-Voting Member

A Non-Voting Member is one who does not have voting rights.

a) A member organization, as identified in Section 2.1, may choose to be a non-voting member. They will retain all other benefits of membership.

An individual or organization that does not meet the organization definition in Section 2.1 may join as a non-voting member, as long as they subscribe to the purposes and basic policies of the HSPN.

Section 2.1.3: Representatives and Alternates

Each member organization may have one or more representatives. Organizations may have more than one individual attend meetings; however the organization must designate only one representative for voting purposes.

Section 2.2: Resignation of Members

Any member organization may resign from the HSPN by delivering a written resignation to the HSPN Chair or designee.

Section 2.3: Termination of Membership

Membership in the HSPN may be terminated for any action by a member who repeatedly violates the mission, spirit or purpose of the HSPN. Removal based on detrimental actions shall require the affirmative vote of three-quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the HSPN's Executive Committee a part of which must include the City of New Bedford's Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development representatives on the Executive Committee. At the meeting, the member shall be entitled to respond to the stated reasons for the termination and be heard in his or her own defense.

Section 2.3.1: Reinstatement of Membership

If a member has been terminated, they may reinstate their membership by submitting a letter to the HSPN Chair or designee which will be presented to the HSPN Executive Committee for a formal vote.

Section 2.4: Rights of Members

Membership to the HSPN includes receiving updates on issues relating to homelessness, voting privileges on HSPN business, and the opportunity to serve on or lead one of many subcommittees or projects.

Section 2.5: Meetings

- a) **Monthly Meetings**: Monthly meetings of the HSPN are held at the City of New Bedford's Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development, 608 Pleasant Street, New Bedford on the third Thursday of the month, unless otherwise stated. Notices of each meeting and minutes of previous meetings shall be distributed to each member, electronically or by mail.
- b) **Conduct of Business**: Members present shall constitute a quorum (a quorum is at least forty percent [40%] of voting membership) to conduct business at any regular meeting. Business may be conducted and issues voted on at any scheduled monthly meeting. Passage of any motions will be by simple majority of those voting members present. In rare situations when an urgent need arises that cannot wait for the next scheduled meeting of the HSPN and a vote of members is required, a vote by email may be conducted. A quorum of responses is still required and all members must be contacted and their responses posted to all members.
- c) **Balloting**: Voting shall be conducted by either a voice vote or show of hands of previously designated voting members at the call of the Chair or his/her designee. Email votes shall be sent through the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development.
- d) **Conflict of Interest**: No member shall cast a vote on, nor participate in, any decision-making capacity on the provision of services by such member (or any organization which that member directly represents), nor on any matter which would provide any direct financial benefit to that member. If a matter arises which places a member in a conflict of interest situation or a potential conflict of interest situation, that member will notify the HSPN Chair or designee and abstain from voting.
- e) **Minutes**: Minutes of all meetings shall be promptly recorded and a copy provided to each HSPN member by email prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting and/or be made available in paper format on the day of the next regularly scheduled meeting.
- f) **Attendance**: Records of attendance, reports, and the names of motion-makers will be included in the minutes and a complete record maintained by the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development.
- g) **Special Meetings**: Special meetings of the membership may be called by the HSPN Chair or designee upon written notice to all members at least five (5) calendar days in advance of the meeting.
 - i. Forty percent (40%) of voting membership shall constitute a quorum to conduct business at any special meeting.
 - ii. No business shall be transacted at a special meeting other than that identified for which the meeting was called.

Article III: Officers, Nominations, Elections, and Terms of Office

The officers of the HSPN shall consist of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk, and Immediate Past Chair.

Section 3.1: Nomination for Officers

At the regular meeting of the HSPN held in November of each year, the Chair will facilitate the selection of a Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will consist of an odd number of members of the HSPN, totaling no less than three (3), nor more than seven (7) members. Any member of the HSPN may serve on the Nominating Committee with the exception of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

- a) The Nominating Committee will solicit recommendations for officers from the membership of the HSPN including HSPN Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Clerk and Executive Committee Members. Nominees will indicate their willingness and eligibility to serve for each position. The Nominating Committee will then submit a slate of officers to the HSPN membership by mail or email one month prior to the election date in January.
- b) At the January HSPN meeting, the Nominating Committee, acting through its chair, will present its slate of nominees and entertain any additional nominations from the floor for each position. The Nominating Committee chair will then call for a vote from the HSPN membership.
- c) The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Clerk, and Immediate Past Chair shall be elected by a majority vote for one (1) year term beginning in January and ending on December 31st. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Clerk shall be eligible to serve again in the following year. The members of the Executive Committee cannot serve in the same position for more than two (2) consecutive terms defined as two (2) two-year terms for a total of four (4) years with the exception of staff from the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development whose terms shall not expire for the duration of their professional work with the HSPN. Any exceptions will require a simple majority of votes of the Executive Committee and the HSPN.

Section 3.2: Elections and Voting for Officers

Voting members of the HSPN present at the meeting in January will vote for the slate of officers and the Executive Committee as presented by the Nominations Committee. The slate of officers and Executive Committee will be accepted by a simple majority of votes from those voting members present at the meeting.

Section 3.3: Powers and Duties of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk and Immediate Past Chair

Officers. For the purposes of carrying out the mission of the HSPN the membership shall annually elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk, and Immediate Past Chair from among its membership.

All four (4) officers shall be considered full voting members on the Executive Committee.

Chair. The HSPN Chair shall be responsible for convening all plenary meetings of the HSPN and shall also:

- Preside at and conduct all meetings of the HSPN
- Work with the Vice-Chair in all matters of the HSPN, keeping that officer apprised of all details of the organization relevant to the execution of his or her duties
- Finalize all HSPN agendas with the designated staff from the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development based on agenda recommendations from the Executive Committee
- Represent the HSPN at any community or public event to which such representation is requested
- Represent the views of the HSPN in public and through the media provided such views accurately represent the consensus of the membership and its Executive Committee

- Designate a member of the Executive Committee to preside over an HSPN meeting in the case of his/her absence and the absence of the Vice-Chair
- Communicate any administrative issues and concerns with the Executive Committee and ~~shall have such~~ other powers and duties consistent with these Bylaws as may be assigned from time to time by the members
- Appoint interim Chairs for new committees
- Serve as a voting member of the Executive Committee

Vice-Chair. The HSPN Vice-Chair shall be responsible for assisting the HSPN Chair in administering the HSPN and shall also:

- Preside at and conduct all meetings of the HSPN in the absence of the Chair
- Work with the Chair in all matters of the HSPN, keeping that officer apprised of all details of the organization relevant to the execution of his or her duties
- Assist in finalizing all HSPN agendas with the designated staff from the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development based on agenda recommendations from the Executive Committee in the absence of the Chair
- Represent the HSPN at any community or public event to which such representation is requested in the absence of the Chair
- At the request of the Chair and/or Executive Committee, represent the views of the HSPN in public and through the media provided such views accurately represent the consensus of the membership and its Executive Committee
- Communicate any administrative issues and concerns with the Chair and Executive Committee
- Serve as a voting member of the Executive Committee

Clerk. The HSPN Clerk shall be responsible for assisting the HSPN Chair in ensuring the paperwork of the HSPN is properly handled and shall:

- Preparation of a draft of the minutes of each meeting, working with designated staff from the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development.
- Review any correspondence from the Communications Committee prior to sending to the media to ensure consistency with the membership's consensus and directive
- Serve as a liaison between designated staff from the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development and the Executive Committee in maintaining an updated membership roster, resource guide and contact list

Immediate Past Chair. The HSPN Immediate Past Chair shall assist the Executive Committee in any and all matters.

- Assist the Chair in HSPN business as directed
- Serve as Chair of the Nominations Committee

Section 3.4: Resignation

Any officer may resign at any time by delivering a written resignation to the HSPN Chair. The acceptance of such resignation, unless required by the terms thereof, shall not be necessary to make the resignation effective.

Section 3.5: Removal

Any officer may be removed from office by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority vote of the voting members of the HSPN Executive Committee at a duly held meeting of the Committee. A quorum of the Executive Committee must be present at this meeting. Proper notice specifying the proposed removal shall be given one week prior to any meeting of the membership in which removal shall be considered.

Section 3.6: Vacancies

If a vacancy occurs on the Executive Committee (described in Section 4.2), that vacancy shall be filled as follows:

- a) If the Chair position is made vacant, the Vice-Chair will become the Chair and will assume all duties and responsibilities of this position.
- b) If the Vice-Chair position is made vacant, it will remain unfilled until the next election. Should a Vice-Chair be needed to fill the role of the Chair during this vacancy, the immediate Past Chair will assume this duty.
- c) If the Clerk position is made vacant, the Vice-Chair will assume this role in addition to the Vice-Chair role or the Chair will appoint another member of the Executive Committee to assume this role. If there is no one able to fulfill this obligation, the Chair may solicit nominations from the general membership and a majority of a quorum of the HSPN membership may vote to accept the nomination.
- d) If the Immediate Past Chair position is made vacant, it will remain unfilled until the next election.
- e) If a non-officer position is made vacant before the term of the Executive Committee member expires, the Executive Committee shall elect a representative to replace that member.

Article IV: Committees

Section 4.1: Standing Committees:

The HSPN shall have the following standing committees:

Executive	Performance Review	Coordinated Entry
Nominating	Supportive Services	HMIS/Data
CoC Application	Point-in-Time Count	Rise Up for Homes

This Section shall also address the CoC's relationship with the South Coast Network to End Homelessness (SoCo) and its committees in which the HSPN participates.

All meetings shall be announced and open to any HSPN member who wishes to attend.

Executive Committee:

The purpose of the Executive Committee is to direct and manage the activities of the HSPN and provide policy guidance to the Continuum of Care Coordinator (City of New Bedford through the Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development). The Executive Committee shall be an elected body with no less than seven (7) nor greater than thirteen (13) members. The HSPN Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk, and Immediate Past Chair shall hold four (4) of those seats while two (2) staff members representing the City's Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development shall hold an additional two (2) seats. The remaining two through seven (2-7) seats shall be elected and filled on an annual basis, with at least one (1) seat held by a homeless or formally homeless person and one (1) seat held by a representative of an agency receiving Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding. Primary functions include:

- Provide guidance to the officers of the HSPN in carrying forth the mission of this Continuum
- Set forth annual goals for the HSPN's operation (distinct from Continuum of Care programmatic goals)
- Establish membership goals and ensure recruitment of new members and relationship-building within existing membership
- Communicate any administrative issues and concerns with the Officers and the Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development

- Work with the HSPN Chair in addressing and framing current issues from the perspective of the Continuum of Care and mission of the HSPN
- Develop a quarterly framework for HSPN agendas
- From among its membership, provide representation for the HSPN at community or public event to which such representation is requested in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair

Nominating Committee:

The Nominating Committee will consist of an odd number of members of the HSPN, totaling no less than three (3), nor more than seven (7) members. Any member of the HSPN may serve on the Nominating Committee with the exception of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the HSPN. One City of New Bedford’s Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development Executive Committee member will be an ex-officio member of the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will carry out its duties per Section 3.1.

Continuum of Care Application Committee:

The Continuum of Care Application Committee is charged with the responsibility of reviewing the NOFA and the requirements of the annual Continuum application so as to guide the HSPN in the development and refinement of Continuum-wide strategies, resources needs, and issues critical to the application process. The direct personnel of those organizations receiving Continuum of Care Program funding through the NOFA process shall be expected to participate in this specific responsibility including the completion of collaborative application sections as may be assigned should they not already be elected members of the Executive Committee.

Performance Review Committee:

The Performance Review Committee reviews Performance Reports and other reports submitted by McKinney-Vento funded programs and provides analysis to the HSPN as to strengths, weaknesses, and ongoing program/systemic issues. The committee reviews the annual ranking for project applications for submittal to HUD, monitors the status of the Continuum’s HMIS compliance, reviews the results from the annual Point-in-Time survey in an effort to produce accurate and statistically reliable data and reviews any other materials/data as may be warranted to ensure excellence in performance both by programs and the CoC system as a whole.

Supportive Services Committee:

The Supportive Services Committee will work to continue current success in connecting all mainstream resources to clients and to the extent practicable, coordinate with state and local discharge planning efforts to ensure discharged persons are not released directly to the streets or emergency shelters. The committee will assist in developing policies to ensure that case managers/advocates are properly trained and knowledgeable of application and appeal processes for mainstream benefits while providing recommendations to the HSPN Executive Committee as to speakers and training that may assist providers within the Continuum. The committee will ensure Continuum-wide collaboration with State and regional offices that administer mainstream program resources, e.g., Medicaid, food stamps, employment assistance, welfare assistance, and mental health services.

Point-In-Time Count Committee:

The Point-in-Time Planning Committee will be responsible for planning and implementing all aspects of the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) survey. This includes the solicitation of donations, engagement of service and housing providers, team selection, appointment of leaders/volunteers, training, and site location identification. This committee was created to implement consistency in the PIT process and provide a network of members to implement this data collection. The Continuum of Care has set a goal of providing consistent, accurate data in all areas of collection and reporting, including the PIT and HMIS. The PIT committee shall convene no less than twice monthly from November through January and should periodically report to the HSPN Executive Committee prior to and immediately following the PIT count.

Coordinated Entry Committee:

The Coordinated Entry Committee reviews and assesses protocols and standards undertaken by the CoC, the CALL coordinated entry system and the continuum's individual projects, along with HMIS data from the CoC, HUD guidance and the HSPN's own strategic planning efforts in order to determine the efficacy of the coordinated entry system within the CoC. The Coordinated Entry Committee shall also ensure that a focus on ending chronic homelessness in the City of New Bedford is made through the coordinated entry process to ensure progress toward that goal. The Coordinated Entry Committee may report and make recommendations to the HSPN's Executive Committee for improvement as warranted throughout the year to ensure system excellence.

HMIS/Data Committee:

The HMIS/Data committee shall periodically meet and be responsible for planning, decision-making, evaluation, and facilitation for the continued implementation of the HMIS within the New Bedford Continuum; determination of the long-term policy and procedures for HMIS; coordination and gathering of resources, and leverages available to assist programs with participation. In so doing the HMIS/Data Committee should provide recommendations to the Executive Committee about data elements to be collected, its findings and the New Bedford CoC's compliance with HUD's reporting requirements including, but not limited to, the System Performance Based Measurements initiated by HUD in 2016.

Rise Up for Homes Committee:

The Rise-Up for Homes Committee will serve as the HSPN's fundraising committee within the community while building community awareness. The committee has initially focused its efforts for raising funds for the cold weather shelter.

Ad Hoc Committees/Amendment of Existing Committees:

Mission specific ad hoc committees may be created at the discretion of the Executive Committee or by a vote of the membership at a regularly scheduled HSPN meeting. All such committees shall cease to exist when their specified tasks have been completed. Each of these committees will create a work plan, keep minutes, and provide a monthly update to the Executive Committee during Executive Committee meetings and to the HSPN during HSPN meetings for the duration of the committee's existence. The Chair or designee will serve as the Interim Chair of any new committee until members of that committee elect a Chairperson during their first meeting. At the discretion of the Executive Committee or by a vote of the membership at a regularly scheduled HSPN meeting, an existing committee may be modified or eliminated as necessitated by current conditions and/or as per HUD requirements.

SoCo

The HSPN is an engaged participant and considered part of the South Coast Network to End Homelessness (SoCo)—a regionalized initiative that provides a forum for collaboration for the three CoCs within Bristol County (New Bedford, Fall River and Greater Attleboro/Taunton) and actively supports and participates within its committee structure. In particular, HSPN members sit on the following SoCo committees along with representatives from the other CoCs:

- Unaccompanied Youth
- Veterans
- Individual/Family Services

Article V: Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 5.1: Amendment of Bylaws

These bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed by the affirmative vote of two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority of the voting members at any annual or monthly meeting of the HSPN. Proposals to amend the bylaws may be made at any monthly

meeting. The proposed amendment will be sent to all HSPN members in writing fifteen (15) days before the next regularly scheduled meeting and a vote on the proposal will occur at the next meeting of the HSPN.

Section 5.2: Rules of Procedure

When not inconsistent with the provisions in these bylaws, Parliamentary Procedures shall govern all meetings of the HSPN.

Section 5.3: Compensation

Members of the HSPN shall serve without compensation.

Section 5.4: Staffing

The City of New Bedford's Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development shall serve as the administrative agent for the HSPN and provide staff support in that capacity. In addition and on behalf of the New Bedford CoC, the Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development shall also serve as the Collaborative Applicant through the NOFA process. In this capacity the City will take lead responsibility for carrying out the obligations of the HSPN, including acting as a liaison with local elected officials regarding HSPN performance and activities as necessary.

Article VI. Nondiscrimination

The HSPN is a non-discriminatory organization and does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, creed, disability, sexual orientation, familial status, or natural origin in accordance with all state and federal regulations.