Steering Council Meeting Minutes

NOVEMBER 2, 2026 | 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
In Person – Kent County Community Action

FACILITATOR:	Lauren VanKeulen
MEETING ATTENDEES:	**KHC Staff:** Alyssa Anten, Maddie Martin, Kate Meyer, Brianne Robach, Lana VanBuren **Steering Council:** Lauren VanKeulen, Ryan VerWys, Tenisa Frye, Casey Gordon, Samantha Westhouse, Adrienne Goodstal, Lindsey Reames, Chris Palusky, Raymond King, Monique Carter, Elizabeth Stoddard, Alonda Trammell, Kate Berens, Lisa Knight, Piper Wilbanks, Thelma Ensink **Public:** Nelson Soto
TIME CONVENED:	9:05 AM
TIME ADJOURNED:	12:47 PM

CORE VALUES

DISCUSSION:

Alyssa presented the revised Core Values, which incorporate feedback from Steering Council. She noted the feedback provided valuable perspective and helped further clarify and refine the values, including condensing them into four core values.

The revised core values are: Put People First, Seek & Apply, Collaborate Intentionally, and Own It.

Lauren thanked the group for the feedback that shaped this version and invited any additional comments to be shared with KHC staff. Elizabeth also expressed appreciation for the group's thoughtful discussion, which helped inform the final values.

BUILT FOR ZERO (BFZ) DEBRIEF

Lauren shared that several attendees recently participated in the Built for Zero (BFZ) conference in Seattle. During the conference, a keynote presentation highlighted best practices for achieving functional zero, which Lauren reviewed with the group for thoughtful reflection.

- Thelma reflected on a recurring theme from the conference: the importance of a strong backbone organization. She expressed hope that the conversation would help define what it looks like for the CoC, not just CoC staff, to serve as the backbone on behalf of the broader system.
- Tenisa highlighted the best practice, “Use visible wins to build political will around systems that keep people housed.” She noted that the group often

focuses on gaps and challenges, and appreciated the reminder to also recognize successes and build on what is working well.

CORE FOCUS & NICHE

DISCUSSION:

CORE FOCUS

The group approved the following Core Focus: Stable housing is a basic human right— everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

NICHE

The group discussed the proposed niche statement: “Lead, coordinate, and collaborate to align resilient systems to end homelessness in Kent County.” An initial vote revealed several yellow cards, prompting further discussion.

- Kate suggested streamlining the statement by removing "coordinate" and "collaborate," noting those concepts were already reflected in the Core Values and could be encompassed by "lead."
- Casey supported simplifying the language and raised the question of whether KHC should serve as the backbone organization, noting political and community considerations.
- Piper expressed concern that the word "lead" could sound overly authoritative and dampen the autonomy of community partner entities. Lauren referenced the approved Core Values as a safeguard against that interpretation.
- Sam recommended making the statement more concise.
- Ryan asked whether aspirations around serving as the system's backbone should be reflected in the niche.

Elizabeth asked if we could define what it means that we are the backbone. Kate asked who else we thought was being the backbone of the homelessness response system in Kent County. Thelma agrees that she doesn’t know who else could be the backbone of ending homelessness in Kent County.

Lauren explained the process of IDS (Identify, Discuss, Solve) for the purpose of discussing the “backbone” conversation. The group shared their ideas of that the root issue was. Then the group voted on what they thought the root issue was: The Role + Scope of KHC. Then they moved to discussion.

- Monique asked who the backbone was if not KHC. Casey named some potential “backbone” entities for ending homelessness in Kent County, including Kent County, the organizations themselves, the Chamber of Commerce, Housing Kent, or KConnect.
- Tenisa said she is struggling to distinguish between the federally designated responsibilities of the CoC and the broader role KHC wants to play. Adrienne noted that if KHC operated solely as a CoC, it would only function to coordinate the federal funding process.
- Elizabeth recalled previous discussions about whether the organization is solely a CoC or something broader. Those conversations emphasized referring to the organization as the Kent Homelessness Coalition (KHC) to recognize that the CoC is one function of KHC but does not encompass the full scope of its work.

- Lindsey noted that community buy-in would be necessary for KHC to be recognized as the backbone.
- Elizabeth questioned whether the organization currently has the capacity to serve in that role. Alyssa responded that becoming a backbone organization is achievable but should be viewed as a future goal.
- Piper questioned whether KHC could be considered the backbone when many people experiencing homelessness are unfamiliar with the organization.

The group generally agreed that serving as the backbone organization may be a future aspiration, but not necessarily the organization's current reality.

During the "Solve" portion of the discussion:

- The group voted on incorporating "backbone organization" into the niche statement or instead incorporating the aspiration in the 3-Year Picture. The group decided to include it in the 3-Year Picture.
- Kate noted that she believes the organization already serves as the backbone, but said additional discussion is needed to clarify the scope of the organization's work. Lauren added this topic to the Issues List.

Following discussion, the group voted to adopt the Niche statement: "Lead and align resilient systems to end homelessness in Kent County."

10-YEAR TARGET

DISCUSSION:

Lauren introduced the current 10-Year Target: "By 12/31/2035, make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time for all populations in Kent County." To provide context, Alyssa defined the terms: *rare* means very few people experience homelessness, *brief* means episodes of homelessness last fewer than 90 days, and *one-time* means homelessness is non-recurring.

Kate asked whether the 10-Year Target should be aspirational or realistic. Lauren responded that it should feel ambitious enough to be intimidating, but still achievable.

Alyssa provided context to the BFZ partnership, explaining that KHC has partnered with BFZ since 2020 to address chronic homelessness and is now expanding its focus to youth homelessness. She noted that KHC regularly uses BFZ data and that progress toward the target can be measured through that partnership. She added that the partnership has supported the development of a By-Name list and case conferencing process.

During discussion of the language:

- Adrienne asked whether there would be value in adding "for everyone" to the statement. Lauren expressed concern that this language would not be measurable and emphasized that the target must be measurable.
- Adrienne supported retaining the phrase "rare, brief, and one-time," noting its widespread use locally and nationally within the homelessness response sector. Ray agreed, adding that using established sector language aligns KHC with broader efforts to end homelessness.

The group approved the following 10-Year Target: "By 12/31/2035, make homelessness rare, brief, and at most one time for all people in Kent County."

3-YEAR MEASURABLES

DISCUSSION:

Alyssa shared that the draft measurables were based on current data and BFZ benchmarks.

The group discussed the proposed metrics and expressed overall discomfort with the current target numbers.

- Ryan asked how transitional housing is counted when determining Functional Zero. After an explanation was given, Ryan suggested using percentage reductions rather than fixed numbers to show continued progress over time.
- Adrienne asked what gave the group confidence in the proposed targets. Alyssa explained that if the community commits to ending chronic homelessness, the goal is achievable, and under BFZ standards the target number would be three. While open to increasing the threshold if needed, Alyssa expressed a preference for a fixed target rather than a percentage reduction goal.

To move the discussion forward, Lauren asked whether the group would be comfortable identifying the 3-Year Vision first and then having the Data Analysis Committee determine the most appropriate measures. The group supported that approach.

3-YEAR VISION

DISCUSSION:

The group completed a "Keep, Kill, Combine" exercise, reviewing each proposed goal for the Three-Year Picture. Lauren also asked participants to identify any potential gaps. The objective was to reduce the list to 15 goals or fewer.

- Raymond asked whether the proposed goals reflected anticipated budget reductions. Lauren noted that this could be incorporated as an additional goal or consideration. Thelma noted that the Three-Year Picture is revisited annually, allowing the organization to adjust course if something affects the budget.
- Thelma also cautioned against removing goals related to chronic homelessness, arguing that alignment with chronic functional zero goals is an important priority for key community funders.

After completing the worksheet individually, participants broke into small groups. Lauren assigned each group specific goals to review and combine. The groups then reported back, sharing their recommendations and strategies for consolidating the list while preserving key priorities.

The group ultimately landed on the following 3-Year Vision:

1. **100% Right Person Right Seat.**
2. **Core processes documented and followed by all.**
3. **CE Workplan goals met with after hours on call.**
4. **Current and transparent data drives decisions.**
5. **Everyone has access to shelter.**

6. **Outreach is coordinated and deployed countywide.**
7. **New governance structure implemented.**
8. **Plan for addressing rural homelessness.**
9. **Adjacent systems partnership alignment.**
10. **Case management goals with standards of care.**
11. **Inclusive and empowered coalition.**
12. **Plan to achieve functional zero for all populations with by name lists.**
13. **Established as a backbone organization responsible for ending homelessness in Kent County.**
14. **Implemented communication plan that includes a community survey.**
15. **Create a plan to diversify funding streams.**

MARKETING STRATEGY

DISCUSSION:

Lauren explained that the Target Market identifies the primary constituent groups the organization is seeking to engage and serve.

The group reviewed and voted on the following target markets: Individuals with lived experience, Coalition members, Housing and homelessness service providers, Landlords and property owners, Government, Funders, Business community, General public.

The group then discussed the organization's Three Uniques and identified the following:

- **Federally allocated, locally accountable**
- **We work from names, not just counts**
- **One system, one community, shared results**

The group next reviewed two draft versions of the Proven Process. The group decided to have staff combine elements from both drafts. Kate suggested the Proven Process should reflect KHC's role as a backbone organization. Monique suggested incorporating a commitment to collaboration into the guarantee language.

Finally, the group discussed a potential Guarantee statement. Several people proposed a "no wrong door" guarantee but felt the group thought this might be too risky. The group ultimately left the development of a guarantee to the discretion of KHC staff, who will determine whether to propose a Guarantee statement or move forward without one.

ACTION ITEMS:

KHC Staff: Craft language to combine the proven process language and make a decision on the Guarantee statement. Incorporate these decisions into the final V/TO.

ADJOURNMENT – *Next meeting: November 20, 2026*