Cowichan Valley Coalition to End Homelessness

Terms of Reference

MISSION:
- To connect, coordinate, collaborate, and communicate around issues of homelessness and affordable housing needs in the Cowichan Valley Regional District, and to promote, support and facilitate the development of affordable housing.
- To foster and support policy to promote the development of affordable housing.

Functions of the Coalition:
Using the Collective Impact Framework, the Cowichan Coalition will undertake four inter-related streams of work that will be outlined in a Strategic Plan.

i. Affordable Housing
- Assesses, evaluates, and monitors the need for affordable housing
- Plans, sets targets
- Links with other streams to identify projects, research and facilitate funding, leverage resources, service provision, education and advocacy
- Help to develop and support local low-barrier housing initiatives such as subsidized housing, supportive housing, emergency shelters and transitional housing (see Appendix A) ⬚ Determine a set of action priorities for the next five years and coordinate efforts to achieve those priorities in conjunction with all of the community partners and all levels of government

ii. Homelessness Response and Prevention
- Coordinates the continuum of services to facilitate a holistic response for supporting individuals to get and maintain housing
- Assists with navigation
- Includes Housing First

iii. Communications/Education/Advocacy
- Ensures communications between the Coalition work streams
- Provides continuous communication with the larger community
- Provides, supports and facilitates community dialogue and education needed to promote support for affordable housing and reduce stigma
- Is guided by a Communications Strategy
- Provides a table for issues relating to systemic challenges
- Pursue a coordinated public awareness program to build community understanding and support for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless and the action plan.

iv. Funding and Resource Procurement

- Researches, networks and fosters development of a range of resources including funding from government, foundations, private sector, as well as in kind resources and lands
- Works to align funding
- Work with all levels of government, including First Nations, Metis and their respective agencies, the private sector, housing providers, faith groups and non-governmental organizations to develop a community action plan to address homelessness and affordable housing in the Cowichan Valley.
- Monitor progress, evaluate initiatives and prepare annual progress reports to the Cowichan Valley community and their elected representatives.

VALUES AND OPERATING PRINCIPLES:

Members and advisories of the Coalition wholeheartedly commit to collaborating on the priority, as identified by the coalition, of the people in the Cowichan Valley who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Therefore, the partners will commit to endorse the projects selected by the Coalition. The Coalition will:

- Speak with one voice to address the priority needs of individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in the Cowichan Valley.
- Use a process of partnership alignment/consensus for decision-making (see Appendix A for definition of consensus).
- Operate from an inclusive, participatory, transparent and respectful basis in evaluating, planning and implementing actions to address homelessness.
- Be action orientated and focused on results and outcomes and impacts on people who are homeless, at risk of being homeless and the community as a whole.
- Use collaborative strategies in all its efforts to end or prevent homelessness be it housing and/or support services, including funding advocacy.
- Liaise with all community stakeholders and encourage their active participation in meeting the goals of the Coalition.
- Incorporate the principles of "housing first" and "harm reduction" and work towards providing a continuum of housing solutions. (See Appendix A for definition of Housing First and Harm Reduction)
- Identify and advocate for selected projects that address gaps along the continuum of housing and support services targeting the full spectrum of age and population groups served by Coalition member agencies.

REPRESENTATION:

- Representation on the Cowichan Coalition will be comprehensive and diverse. The Coalition will include people with lived experience, community agencies from pre-natal to end of life, faith-based organizations, the business, construction and economic development sectors, and

municipal, regional, provincial, federal levels of government ensuring adequate representation from Cowichan Tribes and other First Nation bands.

- Membership can be defined in a number of ways including:
    - Representatives who participate at the coalition table
    - Representatives who participate in a specific stream table
    - Representative who participate by working with a specific project
    - Members may choose to participate in one or more areas based on their capacity or interest
    - Members may choose to step in or out of the coalition, streams or project at any time and will be kept apprised of the undertakings of the coalition via group emails.
- The Coalition will work to have strong links with local governments. (The Cowichan Valley Regional District and Municipalities should provide strong participation, involvement and leadership through establishing a Function.
- The Cowichan Coalition will provide the community 'space' for dialogue and action on homelessness and affordable housing. As such it must be inclusive and provide a trusted and culturally safe environment.
- To ensure that it is properly linked and informed, it will establish a Social Inclusion Advisory Committee/function.
- To ensure focussed and specific attention to Aboriginal and Youth homelessness and housing issues, the Coalition will have Aboriginal and Youth Task Forces.

Members in the Coalition will be comprised of representatives of community stakeholders from a diverse cross section of organizations including, but not limited to:

- Representative members from service provider organizations
- Faith Groups
- Health Agencies
- Community Groups
- First Nations
- Private Sector
- Not for profit Housing Providers
- Community Service Clubs
- Local Government

Organizations will be asked to appoint one representative. Member organizations may send an alternate to a meeting in the absence of the appointed representative. Member organizations may be added at any time by consensus of the group.

Structure and Process

- The Cowichan Coalition will be guided by a Coalition Charter, Terms of Reference, Vision and Mission Statements. These documents will provide for transparency and accountability, and will have a process built in for self-assessment.

- The Cowichan Coalition will be guided by a Strategic Plan with clear and achievable goals that highlight "Housing for every citizen in ten years". The Strategic Plan will include an evaluation and monitoring plan and be re-visited annually to allow for changing needs.

Insert statement here about the Home team as backbone

- The Cowichan Coalition is regional in scope to acknowledge that issues and needs cross municipal, electoral and health jurisdictions, and are not limited to urban areas.

- The Coalition will need a strong and efficient Administrative structure to support the range of work.

- The Cowichan Coalition will liaise and network with other Coalitions, and seek mentorship of the Victoria Coalition.

DECISION MAKING- PARTNERSHIP ALIGNMENT

1. We identify our shared priorities.

2. We co-create our governance model.

3. We use a higher-level consensus decision-making tool (Cornell Method)

Thumb Up = I can support this decision
Thumb Sideways = I am undecided
Thumb down = I cannot support this decision
4. We believe that dialogue is the foundation of partnerships and we stay in dialogue until consensus is reached.

5. We separate dialogue from decision-making.

6. We see every interaction as an opportunity for positive collaboration.

7. We use curiosity to achieve understanding.

LEADERSHIP TEAM:
Currently the Leadership team (Home Team) is comprised of the following lead organizations:

- Cowichan Housing Association
- Our Cowichan Communities Health Network
- Social Planning Cowichan
- Cowichan United Way
- ***Other Home Team partners to be identified as the coalition moves forward***

In March of every year the Coalition Coordinator will ask for expressions of interest from members to take on a role on the Leadership Team. The Coalition Coordinator will report back in May, and at the June meeting the new Leadership Team will be determined for the following year.

The new Leadership Team members will begin their term in June. In the event that a Leadership Team member has to leave the role before their term is up, the Coalition will select another member by

consensus as soon as possible who will carry out the duties only for the remainder of the term. The role of the Leadership Team will be to coordinate the activities of the Coalition and bring items for discussion and decision forward to the members.

ADVISORY: Advisory organizations and individuals may include, but are not limited to:

- Government Agencies (e.g. VIRL, BC Housing, Social Development, MCFD)
- Local Government (Non-elected officials)
- Community Service Organizations and NPO's
- RCMP, CVRD Emergency Services, Correctional Services, BC Transit
- Elected Local, Provincial, First Nation and Federal representatives
- Members of the Public
- Private Housing providers
- Chamber, BIA
- Faith Community

Advisory organizations may be added at any time by consensus of the Members.

LEADERSHIP OF FUNCTION TEAMS

Each team will have a representative/lead who is a part of the steering committee to ensure that information is conveyed both in and out of the steering committee and functions to the rest of the coalition

i. Affordable Housing

ii. Homelessness Response and Prevention

iii. Communications/Education/Advocacy

iv. Funding and Resource Procurement

Each function (Sub Committee) within the coalition will develop a term of reference and communications strategy specifically relating to the tasks and roles undertaken within that function.

MEETING PROCEDURES:

- The Coalition shall meet according to a determined schedule
- Special meetings shall be at the call of the Home Team or at the request of any three Members of the Coalition.
- Decisions will be made by consensus of the Members at a meeting. There needs to be a minimum of 50% of members at a meeting to make a decision. Advisory organizations and individuals will participate in the decision making though discussion at the meetings.
- All meetings will be held in open session and in a location accessible to the public.
- All Coalition teams will aim to meet together on a quarterly basis to discuss challenges, successes, opportunities and to share information

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Coalition teams will identify and share issues, opportunities and action-oriented ideas with the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team is responsible for bringing forward items for discussion and decision-making to Coalition members. The Coalition discusses and makes decisions based on a consensus basis, speaking with one voice.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Where any Member wishes to raise and/or discuss confidential information, it is the responsibility of that Member to advise other Members that the information is to be treated as confidential. Members agree not to divulge any and all confidential information.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Members must declare interest or conflict of interest prior to meetings or as the situation arises (see definition of Conflict of Interest in Appendix A).

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

1. HOMELESSNESS (Source: Comox Valley Homelessness Task Force Terms of Reference)

There are many definitions of homelessness which have been developed by various other communities and studies. For the purpose of these Terms of Reference, homelessness is defined as follows:

Absolute Homelessness Individuals and families who are living in:

- Public spaces without legal claim (e.g. living in the bush, on the streets, in abandoned buildings, in tents);
- A temporary or emergency shelter or safe house;
- A public facility or service (e.g. hospital, care facility, rehabilitation or treatment center, correctional facility) and cannot return to a stable residence; or
- Individuals and families who are: Financially, sexually, physically or emotionally exploited to maintain their shelter. (difficult to identify - drug houses, prostitution.)

Homelessness due to crisis Individuals and families who are:

- Homeless because their previous residence became uninhabitable due to a human caused or natural disaster (e.g. fire, flood).   Risk of Homelessness/Hidden Homelessness Individuals and families who are living in:
- Temporary accommodation where they do not have control over the length and conditions of tenure (e.g. staying in a guest room, name not on lease, couch surfing, two or more individuals who are double bunking in a single room because appropriate housing is not available);
- Time-limited housing designed to help them transition from being homeless to living in a permanent form of housing, e.g. transitional housing or second-stage housing;
- Accommodation where tenancy will be terminated within three months (e.g. given notice by landlord for a variety of reasons which may include tenant behavior).

2. CONTINUUM OF HOUSING: (Source: http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/housing-andhomelessness-vol4/housing-glossary) Permanent: Long-term housing with no maximum length of stay. Transitional: Time-limited, affordable, supported or independent housing. Tenants can usually remain in transitional housing for up to 2 or 3 years. Emergency: Short-term shelter for people in crisis. Some emergency shelters also provide meals and support services to the people who stay there. Supported/Supportive: Housing where the tenants have access to support services on the premises in addition to housing. These services vary and can include:

- Life skills training: income management, job training, medication management
- Medical care
- Social activities
- Problem substance use rehabilitation programs
- Case management

Scattered Site: Housing units are spread out in apartments in various locations around the city rather than all in one common building. These apartments may be either market or social housing. Dedicated Site: Housing units that are placed in a common building where all the tenants are part of the program. Subsidized: Housing that receives funding from the government or community organization. Tenants who live in subsidized housing pay rent that is less than market value. Social Housing: Housing provided by the government (public housing) or a community organization (non-profit housing). Private Market: Rental housing that is run by private landlords rather than a housing program.

3. HOUSING FIRST: (Source: Campbell River Homeless Task Force Terms of Reference)

Means the provision of permanent low-barrier, supportive housing with a focus on harm reduction. The goal of "housing first" is to immediately house people who are homeless no matter what is going on in their life. The "housing first" principle is based on the premise that people will be accepted with substance abuse and/or mental illnesses rather that turning those people away. Research indicates that by first providing housing, other issues are also more effectively addressed.

4.CONSENSUS:

Consensus decision making is defined as, when the member "can live with" the decision of the group. A clear and common understanding of the issues is achieved by each member having the opportunity to express their opinion and for hearing the rationale and concerns of all the other members. We will use partnership alignment as our mechanism for coming to consensus.

PARTNERSHIP ALIGNMENT Elements of Partnership Alignment

1. We identify our shared priorities.

2. We co-create our governance model.

3. We use a higher-level consensus decision-making tool (Cornell Method)

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