

**Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County
ARPA Homelessness Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Name: ARPA Homelessness Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: May 3, 2023

Meeting Called to Order: 3:00 p.m.

Location: Dougherty Street Governmental Building Auditorium

Meeting Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/yJy2RGSe1RM?feature=share>

Virtual? Yes / No

Public Input Requested or Received? Yes / No

Committee Attendees:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Morris | <input type="checkbox"/> Danielle Bonanno | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dee Burkett |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Haley Sherlock | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Hersch | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evan Mills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lucy Hudgens | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Madison Sanders | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Catherine Gurak |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Hardy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jason Leonard | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shea Post | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Bien | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Julianne Geddis | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tangela Ferguson | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paige Cummings | <input type="checkbox"/> James Scott | |

Staff in Attendance:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melinda Lord | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coral Rogers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paige Seago |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alejandra Calva | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cameron McGlothen | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lily Sronkoski |

The Cloudburst Group (virtual):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott Pruitt | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heather Duchscherer |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stephanie Jennings | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faith Walker |

Items Discussed:

1. Alejandra Calva welcomed attendees and called meeting to order.
2. Alejandra Calva shared that ACCGov HOME-ARP Allocation Plan was approved HUD.
3. Alejandra Calva shared that Family Promise's proposal to run a modified version of the pervious Eviction Prevention Program was approved by M&C on May 2, 2023, and that approved funding (\$800-900K) may be used thru end of 2026. Madison Sanders shared a brief overview of the program that partners with The Ark to aid families and individuals who are currently going through the eviction process, as well as pre-eviction support.

4. Meeting minutes from November 2022 and April 2023 accepted; first motion by Dee Burkett, second by Shea Post.
5. Cloudburst reviewed work completed since April including: provider interviews, continued data review, and initial discussion of high-impact strategies with ACCGov.
6. Cloudburst then presented a series of high-impact strategies and led committee in discussions around them. Committee was asked to focus on impact, feasibility and what would need to happen to increase feasibility for each strategy.
7. **Discussion on Idea #1: Strengthening the CoC thru funding for FTE positions and other support for local initiatives**
 - John Morris, Shea Post, Madison Sanders expressed that ACC currently does rely on an HCD staff member to support CoC. They would like to continue a discussion of whether and how the CoC could run separately from local government.
 - Cloudburst clarified that some CoCs (including KY and OR examples they presented), staff positions are paid for thru CoC and local funding. In OR example, there's a local agency that helps coordinate all available funding to support a range of activities in a coordinated way.
 - Cloudburst highlighted Fargo/Morehead CoC due to its regional collaboration efforts, its strong CARES coordination system, landlord risk mitigation fund, data dashboards, education/training for service providers, plans for Lived Experience Academy, etc. Madison Sanders stated that this example is the most exciting so far, because it has independent staffing, and different initiatives like the data dashboard.
 - Shea Post shared that a data dashboard like the one Fargo uses is great for transparency, but would prefer providers focus on direct service. John Morris shared that it would be helpful because the lack of compiled/clearly communicate data contributes to lack of local understanding of the issue and could help with future funding opportunities.
 - Generally, body is interested in the idea of expanding capacity for Homeless Coalition including staffing for the 501c3 to support various initiatives, including potentially data coordination.
8. **Discussion on Idea #2: Low-barrier non-congregate shelter**
 - Cloudburst shared that feedback from community members, stakeholders, and service providers suggest funding be used on a 24hr shelter that has minimal to no entry requirements. Cloudburst outlined different case studies to provide examples for low barrier non-congregate shelters across the country, including some that also have space for a service navigation center.
 - Shea Post would prefer for funding to support rehab/expansion of current shelters vs. building something new. Evan Mills mentioned that the existing shelters are specific to certain populations, but not necessarily low-barrier.
 - John Morris shared that Athens does already have some spaces that could serve as navigation center, such as the Day Center.
 - General consensus that this is a big gap in our community. However, the committee also highlighted that the current funding source is one-time pot and that there is a need for long-term project funding to insure programs like these last.
9. **Discussion on Idea #3: Flexible Housing Fund**

- Cloudburst clarified that this is a pool of flexible funding, not to develop capital projects, for costs not covered by other pots of funding. Consultant presented example of the Chattanooga CoC's *Just Enough* assistance program.
- Shea Post would want this fund to help people who don't necessarily meet HUD's definition of homelessness. Evan Mills shared that ABHS might find this useful to cover repairs to rental properties (usually spend \$80-\$150K/year on this alone).
- Madison Sanders shared FPA has a very small pot of flexible funding that they use regularly, and finds it very helpful.
- Shea Post asked whether local government will be willing to contribute funding toward this or any other strategy presented. Cloudburst shared that generally, it's easier to convince local governments to contribute if there is a strategy/plan in place. The committee suggested exploring ways to fit a flexible housing fund into the local government budget.
- Generally speaking, there was consensus to continue exploring this idea moving forward.

10. Discussion on Idea #4: Landlord-focused strategies

- Cloudburst shared these might include engagement, incentives and risk mitigation working together to increase access to safe and affordable housing.
- Cloudburst shared example of Open Doors in ATL, a nonprofit specifically focused on landlord strategies. Committee discussed possibility to explore collaboration with Open Doors and Evan Mills offered to set up meeting/presentation with the organization.
- General consensus to include this strategy in the plan.

11. Discussion on Idea #5: Partnerships for Employment

- Cloudburst presented example of Gulf Coast America's Job Center, focused on enhancing job access among those exiting/experiencing homelessness.
- John Morris shared that most of his client base doesn't have as much difficulty finding a job – their challenge is sustaining it due to instability in housing, health, etc. Tangela Ferguson made the point that every population has different barriers to employment.
- John Morris suggested trade programs; Jason Leonard highlighted the Chamber's interest in workforce development.
- General consensus to include this strategy in the plan as well, particularly given Chamber of Commerce's interest in helping to address homelessness in ACC.

12. Discussion on Idea #6: Diversion & Rapid Exit

- Cloudburst explained that this idea is centered on problem-solving case management, which works best with flexible spending fund.
- Shea Post shared that there was a similar program (JobTrack) in Athens, and it left a big gap when ACCGov stopped funding. She shared that this type of program requires a lot of time and assistance, including funding for staffing and flexible funds.
- Group sees this as a natural extension of flexible fund; general consensus to keep exploring it.

13. Discussion on Idea #7: Comprehensive Street Outreach

- Cloudburst suggested expanding existing street outreach efforts, including making it cross-sector, inclusive of entire geography and possibly separate from behavioral/mental health services; Cloudburst presented case study of Philadelphia's approach.
- John Morris shared that although Athens' street outreach program is run out of ABHS, staff are not clinicians nor do they push mental/behavioral health. He does like the idea of splitting the county into zones, coordinating schedules, and prioritizing clients. He shared with the committee that ABHS recently hired one more outreach staffer (they now have 2.5 FTEs)
- John Morris also shared that even if there's more street outreach staffing we'd have to give them more options on where to refer clients. Alejandra Calva clarified that this would of course complement the other strategies that would help increase number/type of resources available.
- Consensus that this is already happening in Athens by several organizations (not just ABHS, also Sparrow's Nest, Backpack Project, etc.), but committee would want to look for ways to enhance/expand/perhaps formalize it.

14. Discussion on Idea #8: Strengthen Coordinated Entry Policy

- Cloudburst shared that successful coordinated entry includes access, prioritization, assessment, and case conferencing. Athens is already doing pieces of this (e.g., 211 providing information), but there is opportunity to improve upon current efforts and possibly even coordinate access to shelter.
- Shea Post and Madison Sanders asked if there are examples of CoCs that do coordinated entry successfully (vs. what is being done in ACC now), including with agencies that are both on and off HMIS. Melinda Lord shared that some CoCs have the initial intake person, and an HMIS person, etc.
- Brief discussion as to whether there is a local need for a single entry point into the system. Lily Soronski shared that as a Homeless Specialist at HCD, she responds to emails daily from people who identify themselves as families or domestic violence survivors and provides them with resources. She sees value in the possibility of being able to enter them into an electronic system that would automatically connect them with resources.
- Shea Posts asked for Salvation Army to be included into these conversations
- General consensus that this is something to continue looking into, but whether or not it is impactful will be determined by the current stock of shelter units.

15. Discussion on Idea #9: Equity and Involvement w/Lived Experience

- Cloudburst presented the idea of engaging such individuals in leadership roles, committees, consideration of their work schedules, etc.
- Cloudburst presented example of the Akron CoC, which has a lived experience committee that serves/represents the entire CoC; organizations document how they engage with PLE, etc.
- John Morris agreed there's a huge gap in Athens; the recovery community is a great example of how to do it well in ACC.

- Shea Post shared that it may be difficult to get people to open up about their lived experiences.
- General consensus that this would be ideal, but would require a lot of intentional efforts and possibly compensation beyond just good intentions.

16. Discussion on Idea #10: Inclement Weather Policy for ACCGov

- Cloudburst shared that while ACCGov does already have some facilities available for inclement weather, this recommendation is really to just formalize policies.
- Shea Post shared that this is something that should already be happening.
- Lily Soronski shared that she is currently part of an ACCGov committee focused on inclement weather response.

17. Discussion on Idea #11: Centralized Rent Administration

- Cloudburst shared that this sometimes goes hand-in-hand with landlord engagement, but would essentially allow landlords to only have to go through one agency to receive payments for rentals.
- Julianne Geddis expressed that she is not sure we need this in Athens, when there are just a couple of agencies managing rental programs. The rest of the committee agreed that this is not a priority.

18. Discussion on other proposed strategies

- Cloudburst opened space up to committee members to share other ideas/strategies that they were hoping to see out of this plan that may not currently be included.
- John Morris shared the need to provide safe spaces for unsheltered clients in recovery/with mental health diagnosis, including more low-cost/free and low-barrier treatment/recovery programs.
- John Morris also suggested looking into how other communities considered “service hubs” like Athens manage influx of clients from counties beyond our regular service area (e.g., Gainesville, Cobb Co., etc.). Shea Post agreed that this continues to be an issue.

19. Cloudburst shared next steps and a timeline for the strategic plan, including prioritization of proposed strategies, case studies and a survey for additional feedback on priorities and goals.

20. Meeting adjourned at 5:05pm