



## Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness Terms of Reference

### MISSION

The Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (the Coalition) works as a collective to plan, coordinate, recommend and implement community responses to homelessness (*see Appendix A for definition of Homelessness*)

### MANDATE

- 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 end homelessness in the Comox Valley.
- Utilize existing information and acquire additional information as required; build an action plan to address the identified health, economic and social needs of people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless including a continuum of appropriate, adequate, safe and supportive housing (*see Appendix A for definition of Continuum of Housing*).
- 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 and coordinate efforts to achieve those priorities in conjunction with community partners and all levels of government
- 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 priorities.
- Monitor progress, evaluate initiatives and prepare annual progress reports to the Comox Valley community and their elected representatives.

### VALUES AND OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Members and advisories of the Coalition wholeheartedly commit to endorsing and collaborating on the priorities identified by the Coalition, for the people in the Comox Valley who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

### The Coalition will

- Speak with one voice to address the priority needs of individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in the Comox Valley.
- Use a process of 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 oriented 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.

## **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)*

## **MEMBERS**

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
- Private Sector
- Not for profit Housing Providers
- Community Service Clubs

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 submitting a signed member letter to the Coalition Coordinator. If the Coordinator has any questions about the appropriateness of the proposed member it will be brought to the Leadership team, who will make a recommendation for the Coalition to decide upon by consensus.

## **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)
- Elected Local, Provincial, First Nation and Federal representatives
- RCMP, CVRD Emergency Services, Correctional Services, BC Transit
- Members of the Public
- Private Housing providers
- Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Associations
- Community Justice Centre

Advisory organizations may be added at any time by submitting a signed advisory letter to the Coalition Coordinator. If the Coordinator has any questions about the appropriateness of the proposed advisory member it will be brought to the Leadership team, who will make a recommendation for the Coalition to decide upon by consensus.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

The Coalition to End Homelessness is committed to creating and maintaining a collaborative environment congruent to our Values and Operating Principles.

All members involved in the Coalition have an obligation to communicate transparently, inclusively and respectfully with one another and to provide reasons for decisions or actions when necessary. Members will not divulge confidential information and must declare conflict of interest when appropriate.

Coalition members are open to different points of view but also recognize that human interactions can be complex. With this understanding, when disagreements arise between members, greater understanding and patience by all is needed. The presence of conflict, if dealt with effectively, can be an opportunity for members to learn from one another and identify Coalition values and operating systems which may need to be improved upon.

Members and advisories agree to, and understand that, a breach of any of the values and operating principles may result in a process of transparent and respectful conflict resolution. The conflict is to be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity, and participants in the conflict resolution process will be prepared to listen to the other parties' positions with an open mind. Discussions will focus on resolving the essence of the dispute, rather than any unrelated personal disagreements between the parties. If members of the Coalition need support to resolve a conflict the Leadership Team can assist in finding a neutral third party with the goal of resolving the conflict to everyone's satisfaction.

## **LEADERSHIP TEAM**

In May of every year the Coalition Coordinator will ask for expressions of interest from members to take on a Leadership Team role. The Leadership Team is an appointed team of six members, with no less than four members at any time. At the June Coalition meeting the new Leadership Team will be determined by consensus for the following year beginning their term in September. If a Leadership Team member

leaves their role before the term is over it is up to the discretion of the remaining members to make a replacement. 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.

## **MEETING PROCEDURES**

- The Coalition shall meet monthly on the first Wednesday of the month from September to June (unless otherwise agreed upon)
- Twice a year the Coalition will hold extended meetings by 30 minutes to provide time for discussion among Coalition teams
- Special meetings shall be at the call of the Leadership 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.

## **HOMELESSNESS SUPPORTS SERVICE FUND EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

The Coalition makes annual recommendations for projects to be funded by the CVRD Homelessness Supports Service Fund. In order to be considered for this funding, member agencies must submit an Expression of Interest Application that will be used to determine the Coalition's recommendations to the CVRD for each funding cycle. The Coalition Leadership Team will review applications to determine which projects address gaps along the continuum and fit within the objectives of the 5 Year Plan.

Recommendations will be brought forth to the Coalition, and projects will be recommended to the CVRD by a process of consensus decision-making (*please see Appendix A for a definition of consensus decision-making*).

These recommendations are brought forward to the CVRD Board of Directors each winter for a final vote, and the CVRD will hold the funding contracts directly with the chosen agencies

### **Application Requirements**

1. Applicant must be a member agency of the Coalition.
2. Applicants must incorporate and be striving towards the mission and mandate of the Coalition in their proposed project.
3. Applications will only be accepted for projects that increase the number of available affordable housing units on the continuum of housing targeting the full spectrum of population groups. (*See Appendix A for a definition of the housing continuum. Examples of housing projects funded by the CVRD HSS can found in the Coalition's 5 Year Plan*)

## LETTERS OF SUPPORT

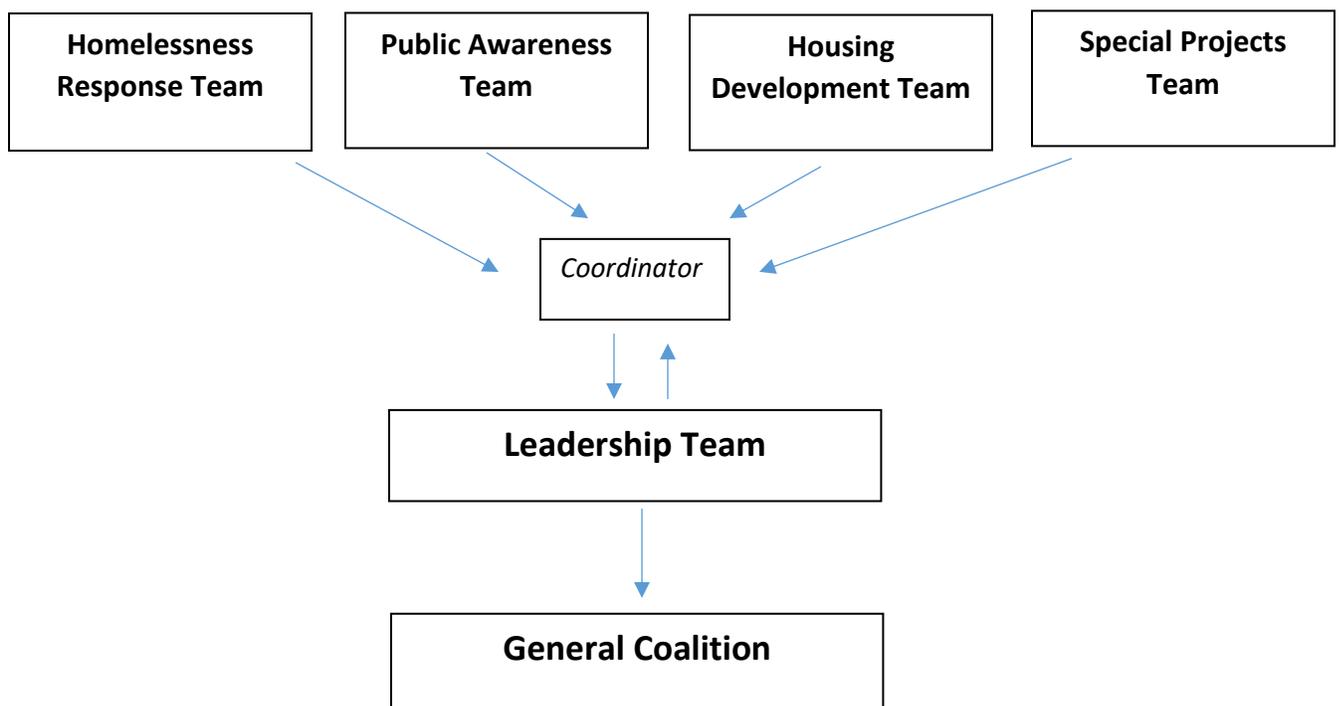
The Coalition Leadership Team will review requests for letters of support to determine which projects address gaps along the continuum and fit within the objectives of the 5 Year Plan.

### Requirements

1. Request must come from a member or advisory agency of the Coalition.
2. Applicants must incorporate and be striving towards the mission and mandate of the Coalition
3. Letters of support will only be written for projects that increase the number of available affordable housing units on the continuum of housing targeting the full spectrum of population groups. *(See Appendix A for a definition of the housing continuum.)*

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Coalition teams will identify and share issues, opportunities and action-oriented ideas with the Leadership Team via the Coordinator. 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.



## APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

### 1. HOMELESSNESS (Source: Campbell River 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-and-homelessness-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. 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.

#### GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT FOR MODIFIED CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

(Source: Comox Valley Community Health Network)

##### Gradients of Agreement:

- A. **Whole-hearted Agreement** - 5
- B. **Agree with minor concern** - 4
- C. **Don't like but will support** - 3
- D. **More discussion needed** - 2
- E. **Serious disagreement** - 1

**This process can be used by showing fingers or numbered cards in smaller groups.**

The gradient of agreement scale is explained to participants. After discussion on a topic for a decision and airing of any concerns, the facilitator takes a “**pulse check**” on a proposal for decision using the gradients of agreement. If everyone is a 3-6, the decision is made by full consensus and the group moves on.

If any participant expresses a 1 or a 2 on the scale, they are given the opportunity to explain their concerns and suggest alternatives. Once those have been heard, the facilitator works with group to re-phrase a revised proposal for decision that attempts to address concerns. Making the revised proposal, the facilitator calls for a **decision**. Participants at the meeting are asked to communicate their level of agreement again with the strengthened proposal.

If all participants fall within #3-5 full consensus is reached.

If fewer than 10% of participants express a 1-2, the group will proceed on the basis of a modified consensus.

If more than 10% of the participants at the meeting fall within # 1-2, the decision requires more discussion (and may be further discussed or delayed). At any point in the decision making process, people who express a #1-2 must be willing to work with the group to develop a compromise proposal.

#### **4. 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 than turning those people away. Research indicates that by first providing housing, other issues are also more effectively addressed.

#### **5. HARM REDUCTION: (Source: Harm Reduction Coalition)**

Harm Reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for the rights of people who use drugs. – Harm Reduction coalition

#### **6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: (Source: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/conflict-of-interest.html>)**

A situation that has the potential to undermine the impartiality of a person because of the possibility of a clash between the person's self-interest and professional interest or public interest