Pathways Home

A Regional Homelessness Action Plan for Local and Tribal Governments

Interdepartmental Teams Toolkit

July 2022

MARICOPA ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

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Executive Summary

To remove silos and barriers and ensure a coordinated agencywide response to homelessness, local and tribal governments can establish interdepartmental cross-sector teams. The teams can review policies, assess resources to ensure effective coordination, and address challenges that departments encounter when responding to homelessness. Teams include departments across the local jurisdiction and that meet on a regular basis. As part of Pathways Home: A Regional Action Plan for Local and Tribal Governments, interdepartmental teams can help to address homelessness. This toolkit provides a framework to begin an interdepartmental team, including FAQs, Tips, Roles & Responsibilities, questions to get the team started, Roster of Sample Participants, Case Study of a team in action, and sample materials to reference.

Interdepartmental teams have shown to reduce overall cost to cities due to interdisciplinary work, reduction in duplication of efforts, and improved coordination of care. Overall, staff know who to call and how to better serve the constituent. Interdepartmental teams also have shown to increase trust across departments, creating a safe space to have conversations and to better understand how to address homelessness.

FAQs

1. **Are there different meetings for different groups of people and how often do they meet?**

   Most local jurisdictions have developed two interdepartmental groups. One group is focused on policy and brings together executive level representatives from each area – including directors or managers from each department. The group meets on a less frequent basis (typically quarterly) or is pulled together on an ad-hoc basis. This group typically is responsible for drafting policies or guidelines to address challenges that the jurisdiction may encounter (e.g., abandoned property).

   The second group is focused on the ground level, working to ensure frontline staff can quickly address challenges, respond, problem solve, and refer to the correct programs or person. The group includes managers or designees and meets on a monthly basis.

2. **Who is the lead department or place where the team resides?**

   The team often is led by the person who oversees homeless services or programs within the jurisdiction. This can be in a variety of departments, but the person needs to have the ability to convene staff across departments and encourage jurisdictional dialogue. Many jurisdictions have started teams within the City Manager's Office, but it is critical to have a specific lead to ensure longevity of the team and work.

Tips

- It is critical to have buy-in from the City Manager's Office and involvement in the teams.
- It is helpful to have committed resources to the effort.
- Develop a contact list with a designated contact in each department.
- It is helpful to have a yearly meeting for everyone who touches homelessness to be updated on resources available, what the jurisdiction is doing around homelessness, and whom to contact.
- Make resources easily available and understandable for staff who are trying to help.
- It is helpful to keep consistent definitions across departments or have alternate wording available by department.
- It is helpful to keep both the Executive and Program level teams informed of activities related to homelessness to ensure consistent communication across groups.
- It is helpful to create videos or information to share with staff who work alternative schedules or shifts.
- Be mindful of size of the team to make sure you are able to balance getting work done, but also having everyone in the room.
- Be mindful of who is in the room, including internal or external stakeholders, so that everyone feels comfortable participating.
- Understand any tensions between different departments and how they may come into conflict within your meeting.
- Jurisdictions are one part of the system trying to address homelessness. Connect individuals into resources such as AHCCCS, Department of Economic Security benefits, and other nonprofits that can help to address the individual's needs.

Roles & Responsibilities

Lead:

- Sets up recurring meetings
- Develops agendas, notes for each meeting
- Communicates where documentation for the work is being saved and shared
- Serves as the main contact person for all activities
- Facilitates the meetings

Participant:

- Serves as the representative for the department or area of service
- Reports out on challenges at the meeting
- Reports back to department on any items coming out of the meeting

Questions That the Team Should Answer Together

1. When the team is first beginning or when new people are added to the table, who is everyone at the table? What do you each bring to the team? What are the expectations of the team? Begin meeting with setting the foundation and what we hope to get out of the work together. What has the jurisdiction already done and what does the jurisdiction hope to achieve with new partners at the table?
2. How do we coordinate data and tracking of the data to minimize duplication? Be sure to include IT in your discussions.
3. How do we share data across departments to tell the story of homelessness in our community?
4. How do we ensure an equitable response across every incident involving someone experiencing homelessness?
5. Who is the main contact for resources? Do we have one phone number available that can be called? Who do we contact for resources outside of normal operating hours? Do you need a phone tree to help staff address concerns during holidays or weekends?
6. Is there contact information available to members of the public for people to report issues related to homelessness?
7. Is there any sort of training available within our community about how to interact with people experiencing homelessness?
8. Is there someone else who can pay for this? What funding resources are available?
9. Who are other stakeholders who need to be at the table? Who are other stakeholders that need to be aware of this team convening? Are there external stakeholders that could or should be involved with our team?
10. How are you keeping people informed of the work on an ongoing basis, such as front-line staff who answer calls, Mayor & City Council staff, City Manager's Office, and communication between teams?

Roster:
Executive Level – Policy Meetings

Areas of Service	Representation
City Manager's Office	Assistant City Manager or Deputy City Manager
Intergovernmental	Intergovernmental Representative
Police	Chief or Assistant Chief
Fire/Crisis Response	Chief or Assistant Chief
Law	City Attorney
Courts	Prosecutor's Office
Parks	Director / Manager
Libraries	Director / Manager
Human/Housing Services	Director / Manager
Code Enforcement	Director / Manager
Neighborhood and Citizen Services	Director / Manager
Public Works, Solid Waste	Director / Manager
Transit	Director / Manager
Family Advocacy	Director / Manager
Tourism, Arts & Culture	Director / Manager
Public Information Office	Director / Manager
Economic Development	Director / Manager
Planning and Development Services	Director / Manager
Special Projects	Director / Manager (as applicable)

Roster:
Program Level – On the Ground Meetings

Areas of Service	Representation
City Manager's Office	Representative
Intergovernmental	Intergovernmental Representative
Police	Precinct Representation, Specialty Teams that address homelessness, Crisis Response
Fire/Crisis Response	Crisis Response Unit
Law	Assistant City Attorney
Courts	Prosecutor's Office, Specialty Court Representatives, Public Defenders
Parks	Park Rangers, Maintenance
Libraries	Library Representative from various libraries
Human/Housing Services	Homelessness Coordinator, Outreach Staff, Federal Grants Coordinator
Code Enforcement	Code Compliance
Neighborhood and Citizen Services	Neighborhood Specialist
Public Works, Solid Waste	Streets Representative
Transit	Transportation Representative
Family Advocacy	Victim Services Representative
Tourism, Arts & Culture	Downtown Representative
Public Information Office	Communications Representative
Economic Development	Workforce Development Representative
Planning and Development Services	Planner Representative / Manager
Special Projects	Director / Manager (as applicable)
Homeless Service Connectors	Contracted or Internal Navigators

Case Study:
IHOT – City of Chandler

Interdepartmental Homeless Operation Team in Chandler: Addressing Homelessness by Enhancing Collaboration Across City Departments[1]

What is the Interdepartmental Homeless Operation Team?

In 2017, the City of Chandler formalized an Interdepartmental Homeless Operations Team (IHOT) to ensure a coordinated citywide response to ending homelessness. IHOT member departments include Police, Fire, City Prosecutor's Office, Neighborhood Resources, Law, Community Services, and Public Works. These meetings give everyone a comprehensive view of the issues related to homelessness in the city and gives the opportunity to coordinate solutions among different entities.

How are meetings structured?

The City of Chandler has two different meetings for IHOT: Users and Policy. Users' meetings convene monthly for about one hour. Most of the time is spent doing roundtable updates where city staff, including personnel from police and fire departments, libraries, parks, and transit, can share any issues related to homelessness that they encountered during that month. The rest of the meeting time is used to share city-wide updates and review the data dashboard on homelessness.

IHOT's Policy meetings are intended for policymakers. If there are any issues that emerge from the Users' group that cannot be resolved internally, then the City brings them to this group to find policy-focused solutions. These meetings also last one hour but are more issue focused.

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1   Many thanks to Vitalyst Health Foundation for highlighting the case study of the City of Chandler. City of Chandler is one example of a jurisdiction that has created an interdepartmental team. Vitalyst Health Foundation worked with Riann Balch, Community Development and Resource Manager at the City of Chandler, who leads the initiatives in the City of Chandler and provided valuable input to create the case study.

What is the impact of the program for people experiencing homelessness? IHOT meetings have allowed Chandler city staff to address situations in a more targeted and coordinated manner. Staff from different departments can bring unique perspectives and solutions to a problem—as a result, city resources are used in a more strategic manner. The meetings also provide an educational space for people in different professions to learn about the impact and myths of homelessness.

How can other cities replicate the same?
1. **Start small.** Cross-collaboration is important, but if there are too many people it might be difficult for all entities to share their perspectives and bring collective solutions.
2. **Have separate groups for policymakers and implementers.** The objectives for each group are different; issue-specific meetings are more effective for the Policy group.
3. **Passion is key.** It's important for participants to be engaged, empathetic, and understand the experiences of people facing homelessness.
4. **Have open lines of communication outside meetings.** Members do not have to wait until the next month to raise an issue. If there is something urgent, IHOT members should feel free to reach out to the leader of the group to seek support.

Sample Agenda

Interdepartmental Homeless Operations Team
Date
Time
Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Neighborhood Resources – Program Updates
    a. Community Navigation Outreach Team Update
    b. Support Court Update
    c. ChangeUp – Panhandling Campaign Update
    d. Neighborhood Resources Internal Resource Guide Update
    e. Monthly Program Dashboards Review

3. City Department Round Robin
    a. Libraries
    b. City Attorney's Office
    c. Fire/Crisis Response
    d. Transportation
    e. Parks
    f. Police
    g. Downtown

4. Future Agenda Items & Next Meeting

Sample Contact List

Contact	Department	Email	Phone
	City Manager's Office		
	Intergovernmental		
	Police		
	Fire / Crisis Response		
	Law		
	Courts		
	Parks		
	Libraries		
	Human/Housing Services		
	Code Enforcement		
	Neighborhood and Citizen Services		
	Public Works, Solid Waste		
	Transit		
	Family Advocacy		
	Tourism, Arts & Culture		
	Public Information Office		
	Economic Development		
	Planning and Development Services		
	Special Projects		

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Appendix

A list of contact information for jurisdictions with interdepartmental teams to be updated regularly follows.

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