

November 20, 2016

To: Task Force Members, Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative  
From: Karen Ray  
Re: Governance Structure Options for the Pivot to Implementation

*This memo outlines some of the decisions the Task Force made at the November 7 meeting, and outlines some ideas about how to create a structure for implementing the strategic plan you are building.*

Thank you for a productive meeting earlier this month. As a result of that meeting, you generated an 8- step plan to ensure that implementation occurs. You will be reviewing and voting on all the recommendations, writing a strategic plan, and finalizing it in January and February. In early February, the Task Force and subcommittees will dissolve and people will be immediately rotated into a different governance structure (based on their willingness to continue the work.) The work to implement the strategic plan will be staffed by a paid professional.

There are three governance structure models we touched on briefly during the November 7 meeting:

1. Form a non-profit
2. Shape a public-private joint venture
3. Create a collaboration among jurisdictions, nonprofits, and community groups.

We had limited time to discuss these options and, in my role as collaboration consultant, I am taking the liberty of sending you some ideas to consider. Of course, the final decisions are yours to make.

1. Form a nonprofit

This is the least satisfactory governance structure. You will be hiring a competent professional to lead the implementation work. She/he will have lots of initiative and energy. She/he will want to build the nonprofit, which means business systems, grant proposals to fund it, and so on. In my experience, the actual work of implementing the plan will be diluted by the effort to build a nonprofit organization. In addition, a nonprofit needs a board. And important community members would be tapped to be board members, when they are instead needed to move real work forward.

2. Shape a public-private joint venture

While this model has some of the same disadvantages as forming a nonprofit, there is precedent for this in the community. People understand what this is, and the jurisdictions can press for steady results on the implementation process. The Counties and Cities have already given a year's worth of work, time and resources to the Homeless Initiative; they may want others to take up a portion of the accountability after February 2017.

### 3. Create a collaboration

In this model, the “ownership” of the implementation would be shared by the jurisdictions, the Community Action Agency, the Union Gospel Mission and one or two specific community organizations, such as the Salem Leadership Foundation, the Center for Community Innovation, or the Institute for Modern Government at Willamette University. The authority for each of these organizations (the Board or President) would sign a common letter identifying the purpose / mission of the collaboration, thereby committing that organization to the “support and feeding” of the strategic plan and its implementation. The common letter would also articulate each individual organization’s commitment to carrying out the strategic plan, including statements of self-interest and descriptions of the contributions each organization would make. One of the organizations would hire the staff person, and others would contribute office space and clerical support. A key person from two of the organizations would serve as supervisor to the new staff person.

This model generates a formal statement of commitment to the Homeless Initiative Strategic Plan by several community organizations. This broadens the base for the work, and engages community leaders who may have not yet paid a lot of attention to the plan. In addition, it provides a broad platform of support for the new staff person while minimizing the impact on any specific organization. There are many precedents for this kind of governance structure, and specific step-by-step processes to put it into place.

During the next couple of months, the Task Force will need to identify a model, talk to possible hosts / leaders / champions, put a governance structure in place, and hire a staff person to take the work forward. You are creating a clear vision and specific strategies for addressing homelessness, and I look forward to your success.