

**City of Regina:
Homelessness Funding Stream
Homelessness CBO Focus Group**

Final Report

December 2020

By:



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Introduction

This document reports the findings of the Homelessness Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) focus group conducted in December 2020 among a select group of the City of Regina’s Homelessness CBOs. The focus group was moderated by Praxis Consulting on behalf of the City of Regina.

In April 2020, City Council provided direction to City Administration to establish a homelessness funding stream to support the implementation of the Plan to End Homelessness for Regina. The purpose of the focus group was to gain an informed perspective from the Homelessness CBOs with respect to what should be included in the development of permanent supportive housing, including relevant supports, partnerships, and barriers. Perceptions were also gathered regarding feasibility.

Group Composition

The focus group was conducted virtually on December 7th, 2020. All participants were selected and invited by the City of Regina to participate.

Turn-out and engagement were strong in the session. The details of the group are described in the table below.

Focus Group Details			
<i>Participants</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i># of Attendees</i>
Homelessness CBO	Monday, December 7	1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	22

The moderator’s guide used in the session is included in Appendix A.

Interpreting Focus Groups

Focus groups are designed to reveal qualitative information – perceptions, outlooks and attitudes. They can be used to deconstruct perceptions, provide indications of how values or expectations combine with experience to create attitudes, and explore how these have developed and may be developed further.

Focus groups can generate insights into range, depth and intensity. They are more useful for gauging commitment than for estimating the extent of views. As the research is conducted “live”, it is possible to follow leads that appear in the discussion and track unforeseen drivers.

The following results should be understood as subjective and personal to the individuals who offered them in the sessions. They are valuable as insights into how opinion is framed and how values lead to attitudes, but because of sample sizes, they are not statistically significant.

Citations

Throughout this report, comments from participants are included to provide context and help illustrate or underscore findings. In some cases, these are direct quotes from individual participants; in others, citations paraphrase discussions, or allow multifaceted or similar comments to be synthesized succinctly.

Focus Group Results

The focus group discussion has been summarized according to the order questions were asked. The narrative and citations show participant inputs.

The Appropriateness of Permanent Supportive Housing

The City began the focus group with an introductory presentation that provided background information and defined Permanent Supportive Housing to ensure everyone was on the same page. Following the presentation, participants were asked to share their general thoughts about the appropriateness of Permanent Supportive Housing.

Is the estimated \$30,000 per space in operational funding annually feasible to provide support services and associated program costs? If not, what would your organization find feasible to operate permanent supportive housing on an annual basis?

Participants generally had many questions regarding what was included in the parameters of the \$30,000. There were some concerns surrounding single-unit viability, annual salaries for support workers, and whether operational costs included expenses such as food and rent, or whether these costs would be covered by money provided through Ministry of Social Services programming.

Key Themes:

- **Clarification Needed** – Several participants were unsure what would be included in the operational funding (food, wages, rent, etc.) and therefore were unsure if \$30,000 was sufficient or not.
- **Economies of Scale** – Some participants highlighted the economies of scale, indicating that the more permanent supportive housing you have within a single building, the easier it is to staff it 24 hours a day.

Citations:

“It is feasible if you are to say can you support one person for \$30,000 and that is our concentration. With multi-residential, where you are supporting more, there is an increased cost. There is the initial cost and then it depends on the time frame for the hard-to-house or hard-to-keep-housed with all sorts of inclusion programs that go with it. There is probably a greater upfront cost than when you move along and the resident starts transitioning. So, \$30,000 in an organization in a congregant, multi-residential, supportive housing environment would work, without a problem at all from an operational point of view. I think that if you were to go single one-to-one you would be having challenges, but in a larger group, not a problem at all.”

“In regard to the \$30,000, would those costs be expected to cover any kind of wages, or staffing or labour to support any individuals in supportive housing? That is the one concern that I have. For \$30,000 for a year in permanent supportive housing, you essentially want to make sure that you have people there 24 hours. If \$30,000 is to cover those costs as well as any additional operating costs, this might be somewhat iffy. I do not know if you would be able to find someone who would be willing to be around 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with an annual salary of \$30,000. I am just not sure what the intention is of that operational funding, or if we are to find money elsewhere to fund these support workers. Is that \$30,000 meant to also include those support costs? I just cannot see permanent supportive housing

working without those support workers. It is one thing to have housing and food, but these are individuals who are needing more support.”

“I think that someone would generally be on social assistance on top of this to help pay for the rent, but this \$30,000 would be the not-for-profit’s obligation to make sure that they were there. With the supportive housing piece, I assume that the bulk of that would go towards wages so that those people have the wrap-around supports they need to succeed. That is my interpretation. That \$30,000 would be to ensure that they have everything that they need to make it stick. It is my thoughts too, that it is dependent on economies of scale as to whether or not you are able to make this work. Trying to do a small case load on \$30,000 is pretty slim, but if you add that up into a caseload with more people, that is a manageable amount, and you can start doing things like providing 24-hour staffing.”

“I think that based on how much we have spent per year on clients and taking into consideration the added costs that go along with permanent supportive housing, I have budgeted it out that if we were to have permanent supportive housing, it would be closer to \$55,000 a space.”

“If you use \$20/hour as a wage for \$2,000 at 7 days a week, that works out to about \$175,000. If you use that as general planning, you are either above it or you are below it. So that is why the \$30,000 doesn’t work if you are going at it as an individual. This is going to encourage partnerships and working with various organizations. If you use the CLSD funding amount as a cursor and look at some of those then you get a general feel.”

City Administration has identified that 10% of funding provided for permanent supportive housing would be required to cover administrative or overhead costs (capital costs excluded). Is 10% appropriate? What would your organization use administrative costs to cover?

The general consensus from participants was that 10% to 15% is characteristic of not-for-profit grants. Some pointed out that the figure is low for public sector and having a hard cap may restrict competitive applicants.

Citations:

“We typically throw our overhead costs (HR, finance, IT, insurance, etc.) into our administrative costs. If you are a private sector, for-profit company then you would be looking at 15% to 17%. For us it would be 3% to 5% on top of that. I think that 10% for not-for-profit is a start. I think if you were to compare it to public sector, this is low, but for private sector, charitable, not-for-profit this falls well within the norm for the province. These are different from the operational pieces.”

“Most of us are familiar with applying for grants. I would say generally that 10% to 15% is often laid out as top-end admin pieces. The only thing that I would caution is again, there is an economy of scale. So, some larger organizations might have their finance person split between 10 programs, they will be able to do it on 10%. Small organizations might have a hard time doing that. This might limit the pool on successful applicants if you put a hard cap at 10%. 10% does sound reasonable to me, but I think that some flexibility would allow for more competitive applicants.”

The Impact of Funding on Homelessness

The discussion then moved to exploring the impact of funding on homelessness.

Thinking in the long term, how do you see an increase in the number of permanent supportive housing spaces impacting the homelessness serving sector in Regina?

Although the extent of the impact was debated, participants agreed that the increase in permanent supportive housing spaces would have a positive impact on the City's homelessness serving sector. Some mentioned the impact on cost savings for the City, freeing up time and resources within support programs, the importance of partnerships between support programs and the Ministry of Social Services, and allowing for movement from the waitlist.

Key Theme:

- **Importance of Partnerships** – The ability to transition through the program into less supportive housing was noted by multiple participants. Many highlighted the importance of working with the Ministry of Social Services to ensure sufficient support.
- **Expectation of Graduation** – While the goal is to transition people out of permanent supportive housing, there are complex needs for many individuals which will potentially make transitioning impossible. A couple of participants cautioned the City to temper graduation expectations.

Citations:

"I think that a lot of organizations work with the same people. If we knew that 20 of those people had a safe place to stay, it would free up a lot of time for those organizations to help more people in different ways. Personally, it sounds like a small number, but then it is a small city, and ultimately I think that there is the opportunity to have a huge impact."

"The long-lasting impact of having those 20 people in supportive housing off the streets is going to have a huge cost savings linked to the City in the long term."

"Would this supportive housing be open to families? We are seeing a lot of families coming in with high needs as well."

"I think that this is a start, but if you are thinking about bringing 20, then you need to follow them through. Almost in the sense that they are graduating and going into less supportive housing and activities until they become independent. To me this is a program that needs to be tied into another Ministry of Social Services programming. Then you will have more of an intake coming off the street. Is 20 sufficient? No, it is not. I think that you need to be very clear on that. It is a start. It provides 20 people with opportunity, with choice, and with dignity. It needs to work alongside the Ministry of Social Services and their programs to allow that development and that graduation to move into less support so you can continue the cycle. But no, I do not think that anyone on this call would believe that 20 is enough."

"I agree with everything being said, I think there is a need to support people to transition through the program to graduate people so that we can get new households into this programming. I just want to emphasize the need for those partnerships between support programs and the Ministry of Social Services to support these people experiencing homelessness."

"Through CHIP, the last time I counted, we had 171 people that were assessed and would be deemed to require permanent supportive housing with those proper supports. If there were more of these permanent supportive houses, there would not be such a backlog. The plan to end homelessness

identifies that with homes there is no movement which is what there would be in permanent supportive housing. But at least people with lower acuity could get served, because typically, once they come into homes they do not leave until they pass away. So if those individuals were served through more appropriate supports, then there would be more movement from the wait list.”

“When it comes to permanent supportive housing, I think that it is important to have those growths in place to help people with that transitioning, but I would caution that we do not put too much emphasis on the expectation that they should graduate out of permanent supportive housing. I just do not want this to become a mindset for anyone to feel that they are lesser because they are unable to graduate and just to make sure that people understand that at the end of the day there are going to be individuals who are never going to be able to live independently. I think that part of the problem with the backlog is that there are truly many individuals who need that intense support right now and they cannot be served properly if all of the energy is going towards those that need permanent supportive housing. We just need to be cautious that when we are saying permanent supportive housing that it can be permanent for people and that we are not going to be trying to rush people through if they are not ready.”

What would be the impact on priority groups, such as families, children, 2SLGBTQ+, Indigenous people, intimate partner violence cases, etc.?

When asked about priority groups, participants pointed out that there is a lack of long-term support in place for repeat prisoners, families, and intimate partner violence victims. The provision of permanent supportive housing would allow housing for these groups, freeing up space in other programming and crisis shelters, and decreasing interactions with police and incarcerations. Additionally, participants touched on the importance of communication between support providers, potentially through the development of a formal collaboration, to ensure that the history of individuals seeking support is shared when providing housing arrangements.

Key Themes:

- **Shortage of Long-Term Support** – Participants noted multiple different groups that would be positively impacted by permanent supportive housing – survivors of intimate partner violence, repeat prisoners, etc. Overall, it was noted that homelessness affects a diverse group.
- **Collaboration** – Creating dialogue and information sharing among key providers and organizations was noted as a piece that is currently missing in Regina’s plan to end homelessness.

Citations:

“There is a shortage of long-term housing for survivors of intimate partner violence. What we see happening is that they are going to crisis shelters and they cannot move on from the crisis shelters because there is nowhere for them to go long-term. If we had some permanent supportive housing for that group of people, then that would help with the spaces available in crisis shelters as well.”

“This would reduce the number of repeat prisoners. I think that lots of people bounce around services until they hit prison, since prison is the only entity that does not really have a return policy. I think that this would lead to a decrease in instances with police and incarcerations and that is across more or less all of the subsets that we are talking about – if it is youth or domestic violent cases or anything like that.”

“Whatever happens, we have to ensure it is measurable so that it will have follow-through. It is not just the direct impact on the folks that we are talking about. There is a huge impact in this. Whether it is

police services, emergency services, education services, that all needs to be taken into consideration. So, if you were looking at the cost savings, ecosystem wide, it would be pretty huge. Picking up the indirect costs from picking up these individuals from the system will be a big measurement.”

“One observation is that homelessness or those at risk for homelessness is a very diverse group. A lot of us are focused on providing shelter or support services for these individuals. I was very happy to hear the comment made about families that are falling between the cracks. The support services for families do not seem to be very well established. They are complicated. This program would be able to support and supply an organization to support a diverse group (single parent or double parent families).”

“From my understanding and how permanent supportive housing is run in other cities, it is there for families that have the highest level of acuity. The other programs that do not require intensive supports would then have spaces and availabilities for people like families. No one that has a family is typically deemed needing permanent supportive housing supports, but if there were other supports like housing first open then those could be an option.”

“I think that we are all into supporting people, all people, but within that we need to collaborate. How can we all share information with each other? In the past, there have been some individuals who should not be living in certain homes due to their history. As a landlord, individually we want to support these individuals, but holistically, we do not know what their support needs are because they all come from different organizations. It would be ideal if there was a way where we could all support each other and support permanent supportive housing long-term. If we take each person individually and do not take into consideration their past, it may mean that they have to move. We all need to collaborate together in a preventative measure to support everyone.”

“I am not sure of Regina, but Saskatoon has a collaboration of housing organizations that have pooled together their resources (SHIP). It is a couple hundred dollars a year to join. I think that Regina could benefit from looking into what SHIP has done and replicating it.”

“I want to address the point about coordination between services and information sharing. I am sure every single person on this call has heard from Flow Community Projects. Collaboration is exactly what they are trying to accomplish.”

Barriers and Challenges

Participants were then asked a couple of questions to understand the barriers, challenges, and mitigating factors that CBOs experience when trying to pursue permanent supportive housing programming.

What are the challenges that you have faced when working with private landlords to secure space for clients and in what capacities (single unit placements, multi-unit management, etc.)?

Answers mostly focused on supporting individuals getting housed in the private market and not on CBO's abilities to work with landlords on securing space for operating programs like permanent supportive housing. The top barriers mentioned with regards to securing housing with private landlords included income assistance and no guaranteed payment, age, lack of references, inability to communicate, and delays in landlords getting a damage deposit. Some suggestions for addressing these barriers included having a trustee to keep the landlord informed and having a designated individual to help those who are hard-to-house navigate the social service systems and provide support in terms of budgeting.

Key Themes:

- **Fear of the Unknown** – When working with private landlords, multiple barriers were noted surrounding their fear of the unknown. This included the bias and judgements placed on those who are on income assistance or due to their age, lack of references, no guarantee of rent cheque, etc.
- **Support Persons** – Some participants noted the value of having supports, such as a trustee or dedicated hire, to help those who are hard to house navigate the systems involved and understand what they are facing.

Citations:

“The biggest challenge from our housing team is that often there are private landlords who do not want to rent out to those people who are on income assistance. I think that a big part of that is just that there is no guarantee that the rent cheque will go to the landlord because it does not go directly to the landlord anymore.”

“We work with youth predominantly. A lot of the barriers that we face would be income assistance as well. Age, if they are under the age of 18, and lack of references are huge barriers that a lot of our youth face. Even if they are over the age of 18 and have the income, the lack of a reference often still is a barrier.”

“The delay in getting the damage deposit back is also a huge barrier that we face, and then people cannot move on to their new place without the damage deposit from income assistance as sometimes that can take a while. I am not sure that the private landlords are going to change their minds based on the permanent supportive housing.”

“I am a private landlord. I thought that there would be more of them on this call. But you are right. It is hard to be a landlord and be participative and supportive with those who are hard to house. We are working with Phoenix Residential to help those who are hard to house. We maintain a trustee undertaking which helps provide supportive housing because now we at least know what we are facing. These people are not making good decisions. That is one of the biggest

challenges. With those who abuse drugs that rent money typically goes away if their friends come over.”

“I agree. We face the same struggles. What we have been able to do is actually hire someone to help individuals whom we support navigate those social services systems. A lot of those things that we take for granted, like having a cell phone, mail, internet can be difficult and having a lease agreement so that we can get rent, that is also difficult. There are a lot of barriers for those who really want to have a home, especially if they have just moved to the city.”

Where have you found success in partnering with private landlords or developers? Do you have any best practices to share or examples of where it has worked well?

Participants agreed that to ensure a successful partnership with private landlords two things are critical: transparency and communication.

Citations:

“Our rapid rehousing programs have built a bunch of really solid relationships with private landlords in the city just by being transparent and keeping those lines of communication open. By continuing to have dialogues it has really helped to build those relationships and help our youth maintain housing in the long-run.”

“There are certain challenges with some, but our success comes from working with other landlords. Having these relationships really helps the landlords with having a social conscious. Lessons learned is communication is key with landlords and partner organizations.”

“We hired a person to help individuals navigate social services. We have also offered those services out to others in the city – some property management companies. We have been helping individuals with budgeting and making an effort to maintain their rent.”

Brainstorming Factors for Success

Participants were then challenged to brainstorm factors of success and elaborate on what needs to happen for permanent supportive housing spaces to be successful.

How do you identify or seek out partnerships on projects that include the acquisition of capital investments? And what opportunities for partnership do you foresee among the sector? What would you need in an external group in order to partner with them on providing Permanent Supportive Housing?

Overall, participants agreed that there needs to be more communication, collaboration, and partnerships between different support providers. SHIP out of Saskatoon was again mentioned as a collaborating operation that may be beneficial for Regina to adopt. Partnerships with supports such as onsite homecare, nurse practitioners or doctors, homecare style visitations, probation or parole, and partnerships with the Regina Police Service were all noted as beneficial in some capacity.

Key Themes:

- **Collaboration and Communication** – The majority of participants mentioned the value in communication and collaboration between organizations to provide the supports necessary.
- **Homecare** – Visitations and regular home check-ins were also noted as an important connection that would provide benefit to those living in permanent supportive housing.

Citations:

“We are such a small city, but we do not talk to each other. I think that it is because our resources are so small that we cannot help but think that we are in competition with one another for those resources, and that will never go away. We need a place that supports dialogue, because that is how we find solutions. I do salute the City for helping with a supportive housing component where we mix a big chunk or traditional debt into the undertaking.”

“I like the idea of the SHIP operation in Saskatoon. I think that we all share a similar mandate, but some of our philosophies and policies as an organization may differ a little bit. That may put us at odds as to what is appropriate as we start to create our own check boxes for people to fit into our particular mandate. For us one of those check boxes is finance. I think that if we could reduce that barrier to entry in our programs and have a good understanding of that and continue to have open conversations, we can work in more of a continuum rather than a start and an end. It is open collaboration with one another. Whether that support comes from agency to agency and they maintain housing or supports, and agencies have to be more agile to support one another to ultimately support the individual.”

“I think that in permanent supportive housing facilities, supports would need to be onsite, but I think that there are a few critical partnerships that can come in to ensure that it is successful. I think that homecare and being connected with the health authority and culturally appropriate resources would be really important partnerships. As well, having onsite nurse practitioners or doctors coming in as a lot of clients being served through permanent supportive housing have a lot of issues accessing that. Probation and parole are also a difficult one to get to. So, having a partnership with them, I think RPS is our big one. The onsite supports would just help with lack of access. Without onsite support they might miss 10 doctors’ appointments, whereas with onsite supports they would be a lot more likely to be successful and get the care that they need.”

“I know that the demand is more than 20 and I am certain that it is way more than 171. So, to try and share resources and support, I have often wondered if homecare style visitation may be beneficial. When I think of how can we reach out to the families, that is the one that I am missing, because I have more family units than single family units. When a bad influence starts staying at the house, that individual and child flee. I do not know how this is done, but there are several strategies that might be explored – homecare style visitations that are regular for example. Just someone knocking on the door checking in and asking how they are doing and if they want to have a cup of tea. I do not think that this intervention needs to be aggressive. This is only based on my experience as a landlord.”

“I think that the idea of partnerships and working collaboratively is key to our current model. Looking at the capital funding model we are looking for the partnerships between support service agencies and landlords. As well, I think that there is opportunity. We have a portfolio that we need to be looking at. There are currently vacancies within that portfolio that we need to be filling. We do not have the capacity to be providing those support services, but with partnerships, that is where we might get that win.”

What services and/or programming should be provided as a part of Permanent Supportive Housing in Regina? How do these change for the various groups (ie. families, single men, Indigenous, etc.) or levels of support needed by clients that you have experience working with?

It was noted that having the knowledge of additional supports that are available within our community is invaluable. Overall, participants stated that needs change from group to group, and individual to individual. Some needs are common for all, such as food procurement, health care, transportation, and social services. Additionally, some individual supports including managed alcohol programs, safe consumption sites, and harm reduction services were mentioned. Having supports available nearby is key. One participant also made note of Netflix as a simple, yet important support.

Key Themes:

- **Supports Nearby** – Being able to access a wide range of supports is key to the success of Permanent Supportive Housing.
- **Everyone is Unique** – Since every individual is unique, it is important to be able to navigate all support offerings, including healthcare, social services, food procurement, mental health supports, and harm reduction services.

Citations:

“Things like food procurement, advocating through the systems that we have, whether that be healthcare, social services, doctor’s appointments, transportation, banking, etc. It is a holistic wraparound support, not just in the building, but also how to access community and what supports exist and offering options. These change for every group, because every individual is unique. But you have to be able to navigate each and every system and this changes on a day-to-day basis.”

“The uniqueness of each individual changes. To know and recognize that not everyone, even in the same group, is going to have the same needs. Even having that knowledge of the various different types of services and the range of needs is an important piece. It can be so different person to person, day to day, and hour to hour. There are certain supports or types of programming that are likely going to be needed across the board - like food, addictions and

mental health supports, mental health programming (trauma counselling or addictions support).”

“To add on to the addiction supports, one thing that is really common in other permanent supportive housing programs is the addition of a managed alcohol program. Regina just has a mobile managed alcohol program, but not a facility-based program. This is drastically lacking in Regina right now. As well, I do not know if this is as pressing, but down the road to have the inclusion of a safe injection site. I think the inclusion of a harm reduction approach is critical.”

“If there is anywhere that a managed alcohol program or safe consumption site or harm reduction services are going to be important it is going to be permanent supportive housing. If you think about on-campus dorms or any group living arrangement, they work well because there is housing and then community space either attached to the building or nearby. Being able to have a community area that has these supports nearby that is able to tailor its needs to the individuals living in these units is going to be really helpful.”

“We are good at creating these programs, but we need to have those conversations with the developers who best understand the situation to tell us their vision. Is it successful for an individual, and for a collection of individuals? Will they fit within that neighbourhood and not be ostracized? If there is an adjunct to this program it would be the capital design that has to go into a housing environment that is designed for success within the community.”

“I think that something as simple as Netflix is important. I say that, because I do not think that we need to overcomplicate this. They are people like us. They want the ability to be able to sit at home and just enjoy themselves and watch things like Netflix. We need to just help people by putting them in existing housing. I think that the results will show themselves without great complexity.”

Besides having operational funding, are you aware of anything preventing harm reduction to be located within the permanent supportive housing?

Participants mentioned the importance of design builds in developing permanent supportive housing. Some participants felt that this housing should be drug and alcohol free. Others mentioned the importance in having a substance friendly harm reduction approach.

Citations:

“Yes, I think that some are simple and some are less simple. I do believe firmly in design build. Some of the available homes do not really work, especially if you have supportive staff. Simply installing an elevator, a sprinkler system, and a common area make the building way more efficient for the support person and the CBO. There are some solutions to move into already existing spots; the Regina Housing Authority has vacancies. Purpose built over the long term, like what Eden Care and alike are doing, have a greater chance of success and sustainability. I know it sounds strange with the vacancy rates we are having to be talking about new builds. As for onsite safe use, buildings that are successful right now seem to band drugs and alcohol. I don’t know if it is because there is an absence of these, but it really regulates the activity, like with Oxford House’s policy. Safe consumption and safe use are a good idea. I do not know if you would want to combine the two together in the same space. These people are vulnerable, and they like to make friends and these friends hurt their recovery.”

“I think, in particular, for permanent supportive housing, it needs to be substance friendly from a harm reduction approach. There are houses that are substance free, but they deal with different clients than who permanent supportive housing serves. Permanent supportive housing is a harm reduction framework and substance use is a part of that. I think that this is important when keeping in mind the design.”

“We have a building that was not supported to do what they are doing today. We need to design build something that is made to build success; that has that safe space and community. What would it take to build something in this city to help 20 people be successful? We are part of the problem because we are living in the past. It is a mindset that we have to change as well. They need the activities of daily living that we need.”

Priorities

The groups concluded with a discussion about priorities to help understand what type of support services are most critical to successful housing outcomes.

Imagine you were operating Permanent Supportive Housing in Regina: What would be your priorities? What would you want it to look like?

It was agreed that the basic needs of individuals are of the highest priority. The inclusion of purpose-built housing with 24-hour staffing and security monitoring were also mentioned, as well as harm-reduction resources. Overall, the biggest priorities were to ensure the proper supports, partnerships and collaborations were undertaken to either provide a one-stop shop or provide a network available to those who are in permanent supportive housing.

Key Themes:

- **Harm Reduction** – While not everyone agreed, many participants strongly emphasized the need for harm reduction/managed alcohol/safe consumption. It was generally felt that providing supports and resources for safer use and the eventual discontinued use of substances was important.
- **Purpose-Built Facilities offering Wrap-Around Services** – Repeated throughout the session was the importance of having a building that is purpose-built or retrofitted to meet the needs of those using the facility. Having easy-to-access services and supports are key.
- **24-Hour Staffing** – An important means to protect those most vulnerable and ensure the success of permanent supportive house was through the use of 24-hour monitoring and staffing.

Citations:

“I think that the harm reduction piece is really important. I understand that sober living can be really successful, but I think that the addiction piece is what makes those individuals hard to house. I do not want us to look into a living situation that would end up ostracizing those individuals. I did like the comments on vulnerability and the fact that there are bad influences, but creating a sober living environment is not the answer to fix this. We need to have those supports available and just recognize that this is a risk. This is going to lead to safer use of drugs and alcohol, while still connecting individuals to those other resources to help ween them off the need for those supports. Maybe we have workshops onsite or connections to those resources, but this is going to be more useful to those folks than telling them no.”

“It really is all about the supports. Medical treatment should be the servant never the provider of genuine human care. We as a society and system have to work on that. We need to be there to support people with any harm reduction – smoking, friends, all of that. If we start to reduce that you are going to have behavioural challenges that follow that. We need to ensure that we are supporting that person how they want to be supported and when they want to be supported.”

“I can appreciate that addictions need to be a multi-pronged approach. I would never say that harm reduction does not have its place, but I would hope that the members of the community would see the value of sober living within the community. Sober houses do have a place in our society. Saying that sobriety in a clean and sober house does not work is just wrong. People find life much more enjoyable because they are sober.”

“Under the housing first philosophy, there is the concept that when we think back to the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs – they need to have those basic supports in place first before they are able heal and give up those other tools in which they use to survive, which in many cases is alcohol. Let’s take care of those basic needs first, and we will watch you grow and heal, but until you are ready to move on you will be safe. I think that there should be a choice for individuals between sober living houses and those who are not ready to make those decisions to get sober.”

“Addictions and mental health should not be a barrier to housing. We should be looking at providing a harm reduction approach as well as a strong wrap-around approach, while using a person-centered approach to focus on what individuals need. Sober living is valid for some people, but for the mass majority, a harm reduction approach will guarantee long term success.”

“This is designed for a very specific group of people. Harm reduction is critical. My priority is ensuring that the building is fit for the issue at hand and designed so that staff can be there immediately and are able to monitor people who are coming in and leaving. And ensuring that it has those community living areas. We are setting ourselves up for failure if those supports are not there.”

“Sober living is definitely on the spectrum for differing needs, but in regard to permanent supportive housing, I just wanted to make it clear that it is not the only way for a lot of people. A lot of people just are not ready for that yet and they are struggling to find those places to live because they are not ready. I think that it is important with the building to ensure that it is either purpose-built or retrofitted, because if it is just any building, you are going to be set up for failure. Staff need to be at the door. You need to be able to monitor who goes in and who goes out and the home-takeovers.”

“Having that purpose-built building. We have security systems and are enhancing them. To have a building where there is 24-hour staffing, where you are able to monitor those people coming and going, those are important things. The grant that we are talking about is the operational grant. No, I do not think that \$30,000 a bed is enough. It is a start, but not to do those 20 beds properly and have that capital in place to build that proper building. We can make an impact, and it will have a ripple effect. But people do need to have their basic needs met. We need to create that space where we can meet people’s needs, but it also does have that idea of one-stop shopping where there is built-in medical services. Or we have a really great network to bring people into that building.”

“If you want to get something to get printed in Regina, there is 60 places that will print something for you. In our industry there is opportunity for diversity and duplication in services within the not-for-profit sector. I think that it is great that we have both in Regina and that they fill different roles. I think that we should be proud of the diversity of services that we have in the sector. Three things that I would like to address. 1. Regina was not an early adopter when it came to ending homelessness. We have one of the newest plans to end homelessness. We have learned from a lot of other people’s mistakes. 2. The city

helps the sector continue to lobby the province. The feds have been at the table a long time. With pandemic money they are beginning to double down. They have really made housing a priority. Now that the cities are at the table, they are missing partners in the province. The health budget this year is \$5.8 billion. With the province's ability to end homelessness, it is a bit reactionary. 3. A challenge is that we are so busy doing work that we do not have time to have a united voice. This is an opportunity for the city to help the non-profit sector be unified. It is a challenge with the competing resources and to work with the resources that we have available. I think at the end of the day it is about collaboration and partnership."

Conclusion

The need for a Homelessness Funding Stream was clearly understood and agreed upon by the CBO representatives involved. The participants were engaged and motivated to offer their perceptions, experience and suggestions as to the resources needed to develop effective and sustainable permanent supportive housing in the City.

The greatest issues identified include the parameters on the allotted \$30,000 for operational funding and whether or not harm reduction sites should be included within the development of permanent supportive housing. Some other issues cited include the lack of information sharing and collaboration between support providers and the barriers limiting private landlord partnerships.

The participants offered a myriad of suggestions to be considered in the development of permanent supportive housing, including:

- onsite supports such as healthcare, consumption sites, access to police services, etc.;
- community areas;
- retrofitting or ensuring houses are purpose-built;
- 24-hour staffing and monitoring;
- the use of trustees or devoted social assistance navigation supports; and,
- guaranteeing communication and transparency in landlord relations.

Appendix A: Focus Group Moderator's Guide

City of Regina – Homelessness CBO Session – December 7, 2020

Moderator's Guide – Final

INTRODUCTION [10-15 mins]

- Introduction of moderator + role.
 - Explain that focus groups are a way to collect opinions about experiences in more detail than a typical survey. They are exploratory – there are no right or wrong answers. Each person should speak for themselves. Not looking for consensus or agreement – don't hold back if your opinion or what you think or do is different from what others are saying. Any and all input is welcome and very much appreciated. The ultimate goal for the session is to give each organization the opportunity to express their position but also ensuring that we are staying solution focused and moving the conversation along.
 - Explain note-taking and recording of the discussion - when we put the report together we like to listen to the recording to make sure we've covered everything off that was discussed in the group.
 - Introduce CoR staff observing the session. They may text me or jump in as needed to ensure we are capturing all the information we need.
 - Assure participants that their names won't be associated with anything they say in the report - the data will be summarized and reported in an aggregate fashion without any names attached.
 - Duration approximately 1.5-2.0 hours; not taking a formal break; please mute phones.
 - Include moderator email in chat and explain that participants can email you directly if they don't have enough time to say everything they want or think of something after the session has ended.
 - Confirm main spokesperson for each organization – ensure naming protocol is updated accordingly.
 - Go around and begin with introductions from main spokesperson who can introduce participants from their organization.
-

SETTING THE STAGE: DEFINING PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING [5-10 mins]

1. Introduce CoR to provide opening remarks and kick-off presentation that will define Permanent Supportive Housing and ensure everyone is on the same page.
 - Diana: opening remarks
 - Kelly: kick-off presentation

<NOTE TO MODERATOR: FOCUS ON WHAT THE CITY CAN DO TO HELP. AVOID CONVERSATION AROUND BLAMING PROVINCE FOR NOT DOING MORE>

THE APPROPRIATENESS OF PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING [10-15 mins]

Overall objective of this section: To confirm that the City's approach of funding new permanent supportive housing spaces is appropriate.

- Per space funding amounts is appropriate (was a survey question)
- Administrative cost percentage is appropriate (was a survey question)

2. Is the estimated \$30,000 per space in operational funding annually feasible to provide support services and associated program costs? If not, what would your organization find feasible to operate permanent supportive housing on an annual basis?
3. City Administration have identified that 10% of funding provided for permanent supportive housing would be required to cover administrative or overhead costs (capital costs excluded). Is 10% appropriate? What would your organization use administrative costs to cover?

THE IMPACT OF FUNDING ON HOMELESSNESS [15-20 mins]

Overall objective of this section: To understand what impact this funding would have on homelessness and the homelessness-serving sector in Regina.

- Impact on priority groups (families, children, 2SLGBTQ+, Indigenous, intimate partner violence cases, etc.)

4. Thinking in the long term, how do you see an increase in the number of permanent supportive housing spaces impacting the homelessness serving sector in Regina?
5. What would be the impact on priority groups, such as families, children, 2SLGBTQ+, Indigenous people, intimate partner violence cases, etc.?

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES [15-20 mins]

Overall objective of this section: To understand barriers, challenges, and mitigating factors CBOs experience when trying to pursue permanent supportive housing programming.

6. What are the challenges that you have faced when working with private landlords to secure space for clients and in what capacities (single unit placements, multi-unit management, etc.)?
7. Where have you found success in partnering with private landlords or developers? Do you have any best practices to share or examples of where it has worked well?

BRAINSTORMING FACTORS FOR SUCCESS [15-20 mins]

Overall objective of this section: To understand what else needs to happen for these permanent supportive housing spaces to be successful.

- Availability and access to suitable rental units
- Partnerships between CBO's and landlords
- Programming needs
- Support from other levels of Government

8. I want to dig a little deeper into what else needs to happen for Permanent Supportive Housing spaces to be successful. How do you identify or seek out partnership on projects that include the acquisition of capital investments? And what opportunities for partnership do you foresee among the sector?
9. What would you need in an external group in order to partner with them on providing Permanent Supportive Housing?
10. What services and/or programming should be provided as a part of Permanent Supportive Housing in Regina? How do these change for the various groups (ie. families, single men, Indigenous, etc.) or levels of support needed by clients that you have experience working with?

PRIORITIES [15-20 mins]

Overall objective of this section: To understand what type of support services are most critical to successful housing outcomes. This will help the City prioritize capital funding HIP applications for new affordable rental housing projects.

11. Imagine you were operating Permanent Supportive Housing in Regina: What would be your priorities? What would you want it to look like?

That brings us to the end of the discussion. Thanks very much for spending some time with us this afternoon and providing your feedback.