

Implementing Effective Rural Outreach Strategies



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Promising and emerging practices from large rural CoCs to ensure full geographical coverage and meaningful service integration for unsheltered outreach including funding mechanisms, staffing structures and coordination, geographical coverage, partnership building, coordinated entry integrations, getting folks housed, and more!



Bringing People Home.

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RURAL STREET OUTREACH

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Local Housing Coalition

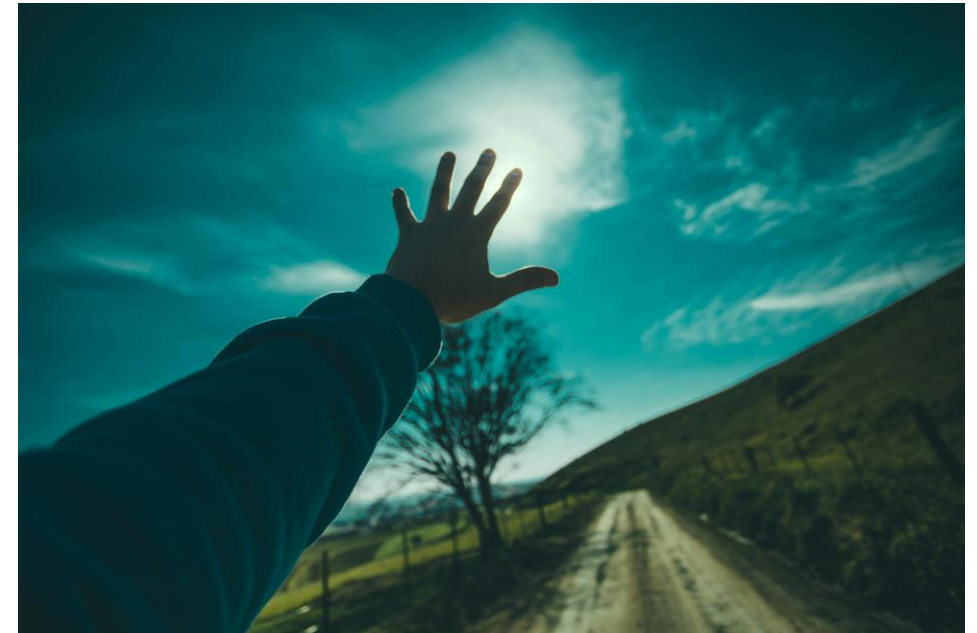
- Brown
- Central
- Coulee
- Dairyland
- Dane
- East Central
- Fox Cities
- Jefferson
- Kenosha
- Lakeshore
- Milwaukee
- N*WISH
- North Central
- Northeast
- Northwest
- Ozaukee
- Racine
- Rock-Walworth
- Rural North
- Southwest
- Washington
- Waukesha
- West Central
- Winnebago

4 CoCs in WI with 69 Counties in the BoS CoC

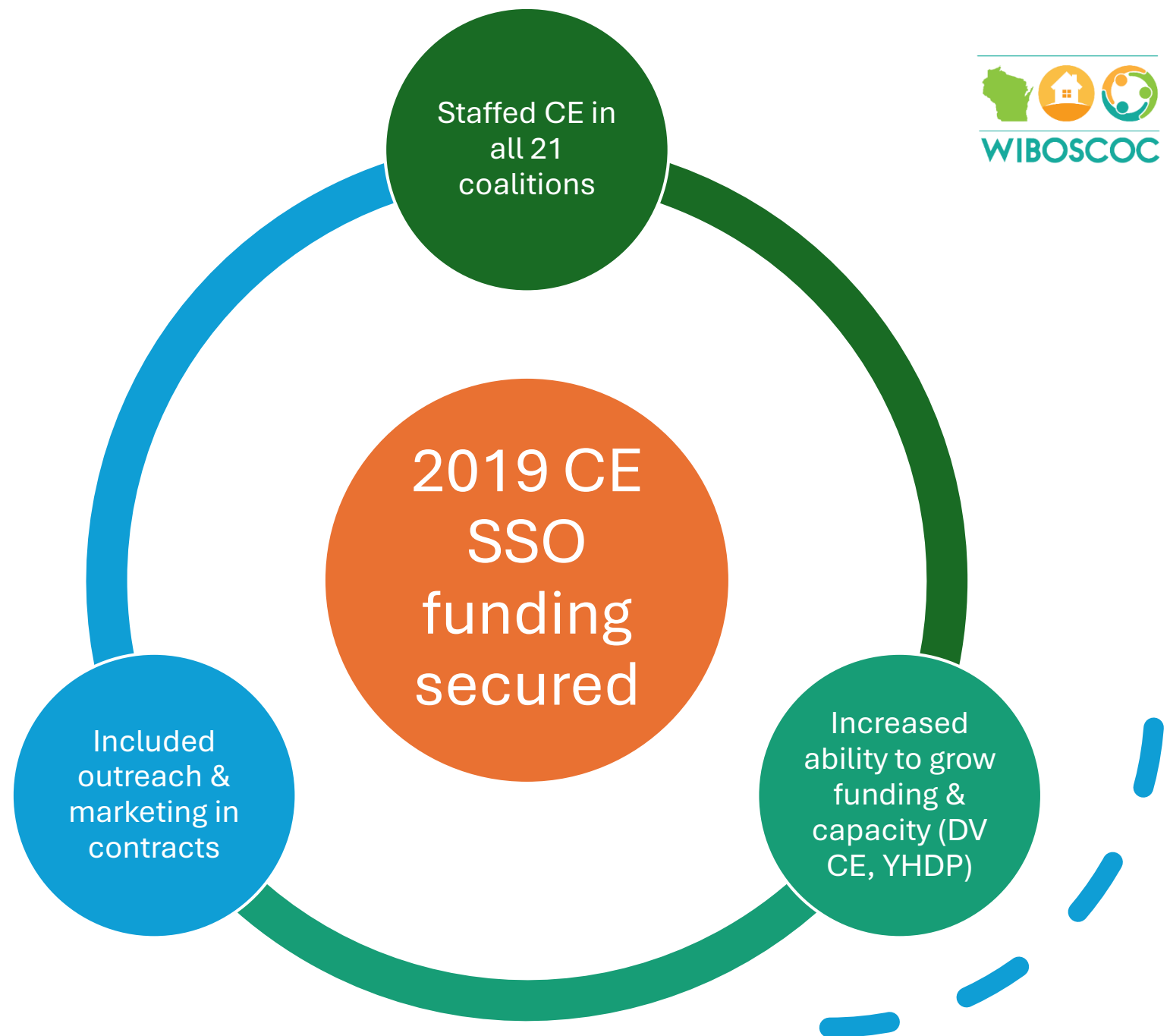
WI BoS CoC supports 21 local member coalitions to end homelessness in every region

Each coalition has a board member, a delegate, a CE lead, and a PIT lead

A Robust and Expansive Coordinated Entry (CE) System



What if you
don't get
outreach
funding?



What if you don't get outreach funding?

Marketing

- How are we ensuring the entire geographical area of a coalition knows there is a system that can help if they are experiencing a housing crisis?

Outreach

- How, when, and where are we connecting people to our crisis response system?
 - After Hours Plans
 - Community Collaboration
 - Ex: WI Dept of Transportation (DOT), McKinney Vento Homeless Liaisons

Annual Planning

- Coalitions' marketing and outreach and after hours plans submitted annually
- BoS CoC provides continued support, guidance, and ensures compliance
- Monthly SSO staff meetings

Point in Time (PIT) Count as an Outreach Event in Rural Areas



Locally led, CoC supported

Emphasis on post PIT process up to a week after the count

Use PIT to connect people to services & CE

- 2x/year (Jan & Jul)
- Localized events with on site services

PIT count activities used as match for CoC planning grant



Implementing Effective Rural Outreach Strategies in Kentucky

Jenna Gurren, Director of Homeless Solutions,

Welcome House, Inc.



The Complex Landscape of Rural Homelessness



RURAL AND HOMELESS: NAVIGATING DEFINITIONS AND THEIR IMPACTS



- **RURAL DEFINITION:**
 - **Exclusion from Urban-Based Funding Criteria**
 - **Federal Resource Allocation Prioritizes Concentrated Areas**
 - **Broad Rural Classification Overlooks Local Needs**
 - **Data Collection Methods Underrepresent Rural Homelessness**
- **HOMELESS DEFINITION**
 - **Prioritization of Urban Unsheltered Homelessness in Funding**
 - **Limited Recognition of Hidden Homelessness**
 - **Eligibility Barriers for Rural Individuals Without Traditional Shelter Status**
 - **Challenges in Data Collection Due to HUD's Narrow Definition**

The Complex Landscape of Rural Homelessness



Structural Challenges in Rural Homelessness



LIMITED ACCESS TO SERVICES

Rural areas often lack essential services such as shelters, healthcare, and social support, making it difficult for homeless individuals to receive necessary assistance.



INADEQUATE FUNDING

Federal and state funding mechanisms often prioritize urban homelessness, leaving rural areas underfunded and without the revenue-generating tools needed to address homelessness at scale.



TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

The vast distances and lack of public transportation in rural areas make it difficult for homeless individuals to access services.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING SHORTAGE

Rural communities face lower vacancy rates, aging housing stock, and unique quality challenges, compounded by higher poverty rates and lower incomes..



SOCIAL STIGMA AND AWARENESS

The stigma surrounding homelessness in rural areas, often tied to close-knit communities and cultural norms, can create shame and fear of judgment, deterring individuals from seeking help.



DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES

Homelessness in rural areas is often underreported due to the dispersed nature of the population and the prevalence of individuals living in unconventional or temporary housing situations.

The Complex Landscape of Rural Homelessness

Economic Factors

Rural poverty is a key driver of homelessness.

Unemployment and underemployment rates are often higher in rural areas, with limited job opportunities and declining industries.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness notes that the national poverty rate is 11.1%, whereas in rural areas, it rises to 16.1%.

In Kentucky's rural counties, the poverty rate stands at 20.7%, significantly higher than the national average.

In 2022, 7.2 million households living in poverty were also severely housing cost-burdened, meaning they spent more than 50% of their income on housing.

In Bell County, the average renter wage was \$10.02 per hour, while the affordable rent for a full-time worker at that wage was \$521 per month, below the fair market rent of \$791 for a one-bedroom unit

In 2023, nearly one million people (970,806) experienced homelessness for the first time, the highest number ever recorded, while Kentucky saw a 9.1% increase in homelessness, with over 5,200 individuals counted in 2024.



Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Change

Roadmap to Ending Rural Homelessness



Welcome House Impact

3,216+

INDIVIDUALS SERVED

.....

75%

EXITS TO POSITIVE HOUSING

.....

<13%

RETURNS TO HOMELESSNESS

