



# KEYS TO A FUTURE WITHOUT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Writing a Comprehensive Community Plan to End Youth  
Homelessness in Cincinnati & Hamilton County

**Jen Best**, She/Her/Hers  
Strategies to End Homelessness

# YHDP – Shared Leadership

Lead Agency



**LIGHTHOUSE**  
YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES



**STRATEGIES TO  
END HOMELESSNESS**  
prevent. assist. solve.



Collaborative  
Applicant/UFA

# YHDP – Launch Attempts

- Community kick-off meeting #1 – March, 2017 – **FAIL!**
  - Regroup
  - Hire a facilitator – contract position
  - Plan, recruit invite
- Community kick-off meeting #2 – April, 2017 – **SUCCESS!**
  - State of Youth Homelessness & YHDP overview
  - Connection to the mission – why do you do this work?
  - Commitment Surveys



# YHDP – Getting Started

- Create a “Best of” Plan
  - Youth at Risk of Homelessness
  - Safe & Supported
  - LYFS Strategic Plan to End Youth Homelessness
- Engage Community Partners
  - Educate, Invite, Excite
- Participate in All Things YHDP
  - Technical Assistance
  - Community Calls





# YHDP – Who and how often?

- Leadership Team – 2 hours per week +
  - LYFS– Policy & Planning Director, Coordinator; Intern
  - STEH– CoC Director & Program Coordinator
  - Bethany House Services – Executive Director
  - Youth Advisory Council Members – 1 consistently
  - YHDP Consultant – Partners in Change
- Strategic Planning Meetings – 4 hours per month
  - 15 community partners
  - 14 Youth Advisory Council members
  - Always ended meetings asking – who else should we talk to?

# YHDP – Greatest Challenges

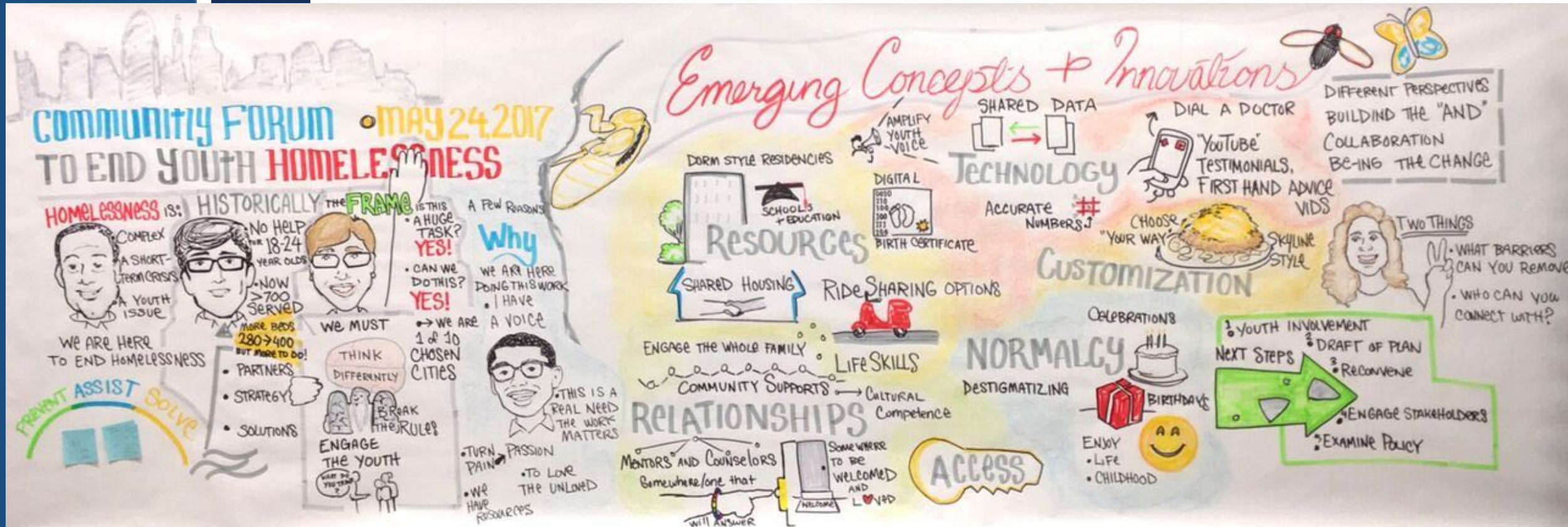


# YHDP - Concept Development

- Targeted Conversations – a short-term series of meetings with a small group of people working to identify project concepts specific to a subpopulation or topic
- Targeted Conversation Teams:
  - LGBTQ Youth
  - System Navigation
  - Housing
  - Education/Employment



# YHDP – Community Forum





# KEYS - Shared Vision

***We envision Cincinnati and Hamilton County, OH as a place where youth homelessness is rare, brief and nonrecurring.***

*Ending youth homelessness is more than just providing housing. We embrace a set of strategies and assembled resources to assure that unstably housed, unaccompanied, and parenting youth are welcomed into a system with culturally competent, empathic professionals who are trained to support each person's path toward stable housing, meaningful employment and expectations for a successful life. There are no barriers for individuals seeking access to these opportunities, and the system is easy to navigate. Our system is regarded as a best-practice of care and prevention and is supported by a data collection system that provides accurate and timely information.*

*This innovative system is actively designed and supported by youth and young adults with lived experience of homelessness, businesses, philanthropic organizations, public institutions, volunteers, non-profits and public policymakers.*

*The system and continuous partner engagement ensure our community has the tools to sustain our success of making youth homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.*

# KEYS - Goals

- Prevent homelessness before it occurs
- Provide safe and appropriate shelter and services to all willing youth who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- Reduce the length of homeless episodes experienced by youth
- Ensure that youth exiting the homeless system have the supports they need to remain housed
- Encourage innovation, system change and sustainability within the CoC and larger community



# KEYS – Project Concepts

Preliminary Matches for HUD Funding	System Improvements to Existing Models	Partnership Opportunities	Additional Funding & Support Required
Youth Dedicated Service Team	Safe Shelter	Scholar House	Transportation Initiatives
Homelessness Prevention	Street Outreach	Purple Umbrella Campaign	Creation of mobile application for increased system navigation
Progressive Engagement Housing (serving all populations)	Data Collection	Housing Campus for Victims of Human Trafficking	One-Stop Shop to address all needs in one place
Housing Specialists	Cultural Competency, Trauma Informed Care, and Positive Youth Development	Site-Based Housing for Pregnant Women	
Data Sharing Capabilities	Youth Centered Coordinated Entry Improvements	Employment	
Flexible Funding to Support Community Infrastructure			



# KEYS – Under Development

- Project Applications for HUD funding:
  - Shelter Diversion
  - Services & Navigation – Youth Dedicated Service Team
  - Flexible Housing – Progressive Engagement Model
- Implementation in Progress:
  - Redesign Youth Coordinated Entry
  - Youth By-Name List
  - HMIS Project Design
  - Ending Youth Homelessness Data Dashboard
  - Shelter – low barrier improvements



# KEYS – What are we doing different?

*How do we create trusting youth-adult relationships within a crisis response system?*

- Consistent intervention strategies at each front door
- Supportive services without financial assistance
- Short lengths of homelessness
- Youth driven housing plans with flexibility
- Direct and immediate connections to other systems
- Continued services after financial assistance has ended
- Step in if housing stability is challenged at a future time
- Make program transitions invisible

*Empower youth as decision makers at your tables.  
Be Flexible. Admit failure. Innovate. Repeat.*





# KEYS – Evolution of Youth Voice

- Initial
  - Challenges: LOTS of meetings with a need to move fast – we missed the mark on training and development
- Current
  - Active at every Youth Workgroup meeting
  - LYFS & STEH staff assist in planning & facilitating council meetings
  - Focus on transportation solutions & YHDP implementations
  - Hiring 2 Youth Leads at Lighthouse – KEYS innovation!
- Future
  - Working with youth council to restructure: ideas include adding an “ACTION” board & defining membership
  - Increased focus on leadership development
  - Planning an HMIS introductory training to show how data is used



I will know I'm home when the tables are turned.  
I will know I'm home when I'm accepted for my sexuality.  
I will know I'm home when I'm not being judged for who I am.  
I will know I'm home when I have support from my family members.  
I will know I'm home when I'm not living under a bridge.  
I will know I'm home when I'm mentally stable.  
I will know I'm home when I have a bed to lay in.  
I will know I'm home when I have a space for keys to a door.  
I will know I'm home when my name is on a lease.  
I will know I'm home when I can be comfortable and be myself.  
I will know I'm home when I can finally call a place my home.

-Anonymous, Lighthouse Youth Advisory Council



# KEYS – Keep in Touch!

## Contacts:

Jen Best – [jbest@end-homelessness.org](mailto:jbest@end-homelessness.org)

Meredith Hicks - [mhicks@lys.org](mailto:mhicks@lys.org)

Read the Plan: [www.strategiestoendhomelessness.org](http://www.strategiestoendhomelessness.org)

→ What We Do → YHDP

## Join the KEYS email list:

Ryan Hall – [rhall@end-homelessness.org](mailto:rhall@end-homelessness.org)

