# COUNCIL 2021 RETREAT THOUGHTS

# Draft Updated September 5

# PURPOSE

To engage the Maine Statewide Homeless Council **through Appreciative Inquiry** in a way that:

* identifies what we have learned during the past year and a half;
* clarifies the opportunities of the current environment;
* reviews what the Council developed in February of 2020 and decides what to carry forward, and what to leave behind because it no longer serves our purpose;
* develops an updated “identity statement” including its:
* mission
* role (what it does and does not do)
* unique advantages
* key 2021-2022 priorities

thus creating a road map for the year ahead focused on the unique role of Council in coordination, system changes, education, and advising top officials in the state on matters of homelessness.

# AGENDA COMPONENTS

## Welcome, Purpose and Connecting

Steph welcomes the group and shares her hopes for the day, then hands off to Bob for a review of the agenda and ground rules. Bob will take us through a brief series of activities and paired conversations to reconnect the group and help set the stage for the day.

## Appreciative Sensemaking Conversation

Members will participate in a series of interviews using several questions that elicit key Council learnings of the Covid era, identifying when the Council has been at its best, and strengths and opportunities for both the unhoused and the organizations who serve them.

Draft Questions:

* How has the landscape changed for the unhoused and the organizations that serve them?
* What about our “origin story” still inspires and guides us?
* In the last 18 months, where has the Council been at its “highest and best?” What did the Council do and what was the impact.
* What would the Council look like if we could “shake the etchoskech clean” and reinvent ourselves?

## Revisiting Our Identity and Role

Start with the February 2020 retreat outputs and carry forward insights about the Council purpose and role. Focus the mission of the organization, articulating what the Council does and does not do.

Key elements of this process could include:

* Focus on how to simplify the infrastructure supporting the unhoused (raise money, support hubs, and advocate.
* Create the opportunity for all Council members to go through a reflective process that leads to consensus (through hashing out)
* Utilize selective “homework”: what do orgs support in the CHS plan and what are their concerns…
* consider a survey (what is the **DV community**, **shelter providers**, and **“others”** think about these issues….give us some data points to guide the conversation… everyone likes this approach. Include Covid learnings in this survey. (What have we learned that has impacted the way we operate.) Ask COC to circulate the survey link in advance. Ask question to elcit roles of the Council and the COC.
* Avoid wordsmithing…revert input to a small group
* Key roles: advocacy, funding, policy, advising, direction, capacity building
* Articulate the Council “why”…the unique value proposition
* Identify the few most critical roles, and then be clear what the Council does not do.

**2021-2022 Priorities**

Look at the 2020 Retreat priorities, and identify what we are called to carry forward, leave behind or initiate.

**Next Steps**

* Identify and clarify the Council agenda in supporting Built for Zero and the hub systems.

**Preparation**

We will prepare and send out a short survey to Council members (or possibly the wider DV community, providers and others??) on issues, concerns, and possibly perceptions of the Council role. (Note: In our design meeting, the group liked the survey idea. Katie and I discussed this last week, as she was a point person for a survey. She suggested that a survey be sent out following the retreat to help focus the outcomes and next steps. I can see it working either way… Guidance from the group?)

All attendees will be sent and read:

* The Council “origin story”
* The February 2020 retreat thoughts on role and priorities
* What else??