A Review of the Leadership/Accountability Structure for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Ten-Year Implementation Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness

The Lee Institute was asked to complete a concept paper for the City Neighborhood & Business Services Department, Mecklenburg County and Foundation For The Carolinas. This concept paper outlines a recommendation for a leadership structure to implement Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Ten-Year Implementation Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness (Ten-Year Plan). Following are highlights of the report:

1) Current Environment

- Events of the past 18 months have created a climate for change in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community:
- A summit on housing issues, convened by Foundation For The Carolinas in January 2009,
- In early 2009, Charlotte received federal stimulus funding to address homelessness, and
- Mayor Anthony Foxx expressed a commitment to the issue

2) Community Perceptions of the Existing Ten-Year Plan

- Community interviews and surveys of local leaders surfaced six themes:
- Admiration of organization efforts
- Satisfaction in having a written plan
- Need for strong leadership
- Need for coordination and role coordination
- Need for more accountability
- Need for additional funding

3) Structures in Comparable Communities

A review of how cities comparable to Charlotte-Mecklenburg implemented their Ten-Year Plans found:

- Ten-Year Plans were implemented through a local government funded structure with a government-appointed board of community leaders commonly housed within local government or the United Way
- Full-time staff (usually funded through local government) dedicated to coordinating implementation efforts and staffing the leadership board
- Mergers of the local homeless service provider coalition with the leadership board
- Regular reporting on progress of strategies identified in the plan

4) Observations from the Review of the Ten-Year Plan
The following observations present potential challenges to leadership in the implementation of the existing Ten-Year Plan:

- Housing Strategy Model
  - There must be an adequate number of shelters as well as type of shelters including sufficient safe haven locations
  - The rapid re-housing plan calls for an assessment of people experiencing homelessness, immediate short-term housing solutions and the ability to move individuals and families into permanent housing with appropriate supportive services
  - Two primary causes for the lack of affordable housing construction are insufficient funding and the lack of a comprehensive county-wide locational policy

- Supportive Services
  - The City and County must get a sharper focus on supportive services delivery if change is going to occur

- Annual Planning and Priority Setting
  - The annual report must include an assessment, action steps and whatever tools necessary to drive attainment of the goals outlined in the Ten Year Plan

- A Dedicated Funding Source to Sustain Efforts
  - A call for dedicated revenue for homelessness programs would need to meet criteria (a clear definition of purpose, metrics in place for accountability, agreement on the specific type of revenue and a consensus in the community on the need and priority)

5) Leadership Recommendation
Successful implementation of the existing Ten-Year Plan requires a leadership structure clearly designed for Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The structure will require committed ownership by both the City and County government. Recommendations include:
- Create a community based board
- Hire adequate staffing
- Designate sustainable funding for the organization
- Partner with service providers

6) Impact of Recommendation on Current Organizations
Organizations impacted by this recommendation include:
- County and City Government
- A Way Home
- Homeless Services Network
- Charlotte Housing Authority
- United Way
- Faith Community
- Housing Trust Fund Board