

FY 2026 CoC Community Engagement Summary

Stakeholder Feedback and Priority Recommendations

Executive Summary

During June 2026, UNITY conducted four stakeholder engagement efforts to inform FY 2026 CoC funding priorities:

- Three Community Listening Sessions (53 attendees)
- People's Council of Lived Experience Listening Session (26 attendees, 15 survey respondents)
- Unsheltered Homelessness Survey (19 respondents)
- Faith-Based Engagement Listening Session (23 attendees)

This summary highlights consensus around several priorities, particularly affordable housing, behavioral health services, employment supports, and the need for stronger supportive services. It will assist the Governing Council in determining local funding priorities for the FY 2026 CoC competition.

1. Housing Affordability is the Foundation

Stakeholders	People's Council	Unsheltered Survey
Called for affordable housing, prevention resources, and innovative housing models.	Affordable housing was the most frequently discussed issue.	Rental assistance was the most selected service (73.7%).

Implication for Funding Priorities: Investments that increase housing access, affordability, and stability received broad support across all stakeholder groups.

2. Behavioral Health Services Are Critical

Stakeholders	People's Council	Unsheltered Survey
Behavioral health was the most frequently discussed service gap.	Mental health services ranked among top priorities.	Mental health treatment was the third most selected service need (52.6%).

Implication for Funding Priorities: Strong support exists for behavioral health integration across housing interventions.

3. Employment and Economic Stability Matter

All groups identified income as a key factor in housing success.

Stakeholders	People's Council	Unsheltered Survey
Requested workforce development and employer partnerships.	Emphasized employment, transportation, and income supports.	Employment assistance ranked second among all service needs (63.2%).

Implication for Funding Priorities: Employment services and economic mobility strategies should be incorporated into housing interventions whenever feasible.

4. Navigation, Case Management, and Ongoing Support

Stakeholders	People's Council	Unsheltered Survey
• Service-rich transitional housing • Behavioral health supports • Resource navigation • Community resource guides	• Lack of follow-up • Difficulty reaching staff • Need for stronger case management relationships • More individualized support • Peer support	• More outreach workers • Housing navigation • Ongoing case management

Implication: Stakeholders consistently value relationship-based support and long-term engagement beyond housing placement.

5. System Design and Service Experience

Stakeholders	People's Council	Unsheltered Survey
• Program models • Transitional housing • Shared housing • Behavioral health infrastructure • Medical respite • Service coordination	• Respect • Communication • Dignity • Safety • Individualized responses	• Immediate housing access • Rental assistance • Employment • Practical help navigating systems

6. Faith Community Perspectives

Faith leaders expressed strong interest in becoming more active partners in the homelessness response system through the newly launched Partners in Hope initiative. Participants identified several opportunities where faith communities can complement existing homeless services: Community-Based Mentorship; Shared Housing and Community Living Models; Behavioral Health and Recovery; and Prevention and Early Intervention.

Areas of Alignment with CoC NOFO Goals and Objectives

Community Priority	HUD FY 2026 Priority	Stakeholder Feedback
Behavioral Health & Recovery	Prioritizing Treatment and Recovery	Providers identified behavioral health as the most significant service gap, while lived experience and unsheltered participants consistently identified mental health and substance use treatment as critical needs.
Employment & Income Growth	Promoting Economic Self-Sufficiency	All stakeholder groups emphasized employment, workforce development, transportation, and income supports as essential to housing stability.
Housing Navigation & Case Management	Improving Outcomes	Stakeholders consistently identified housing navigation, outreach, intensive case management, and ongoing support as necessary for successful housing outcomes.
Transitional Housing & Recovery-Oriented Housing	Treatment and Recovery; Improving Outcomes	Providers expressed strong interest in service-rich transitional housing models, particularly for recovery, behavioral health stabilization, and intensive support.
Street Outreach	Ending Street Homelessness	Unsheltered participants requested additional outreach workers, navigation assistance, and practical support accessing housing and services.

*“United Way of Southeast Louisiana, through its **Home for Good New Orleans Rapid Rehousing Program**, recognizes that achieving lasting housing stability requires both access to affordable housing and the income necessary to sustain it. While rental assistance remains essential for helping individuals and families quickly exit homelessness and secure stable housing, equally important are investments in employment and economic mobility services that help participants obtain jobs with wages sufficient to maintain housing over the long term. By combining housing support with workforce development, financial coaching, benefits access, and career pathway services through our One Door model, Home for Good helps individuals move beyond crisis and toward lasting self-sufficiency, reducing the likelihood of future homelessness and strengthening outcomes for the entire Continuum of Care system.”*

*Michael Williamson
President & Chief Executive Officer
United Way of Southeast Louisiana*
