



Case Study: Multi-Organizational Management of CoC Youth Action Board

Summary

This case study examines the relaunch of the Greater Richmond Youth Action Board (YAB) in 2025. Facing a history of membership issues, the Continuums of Care (CoC) moved away from a single-lead agency structure in favor of a shared management model. By distributing the contracting, payment, and support of YAB members across all Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)-funded agencies, the YAB became a functional, sustainable decision making body within the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC). The YAB relaunch demonstrates that a shared management model can successfully sustain youth engagement efforts when responsibility, communication, and administrative support are clearly structured.

Introduction

Youth Action Boards are a requirement for CoCs with YHDP funding. A YAB is a group of youth 18–24 years of age who have experienced homelessness and contribute to coordinated decision-making related to preventing and ending youth homelessness in their community. The GRCoC needed to relaunch its Youth Action Board. In the past, the YAB was coordinated by one agency, leaving that single organization responsible for all of the infrastructure related to supporting the group.

In 2024, YHDP-funded agencies came together to form the GRCoC YAB Taskforce to relaunch the Youth Action Board. None of the agencies were interested in taking full responsibility for the YAB. There were concerns about the time needed to staff the group, low membership due to recruitment difficulties, and the stress of managing conflict within the group. Together, they decided on a shared management model that delegated YAB responsibilities across all YHDP-funded agencies. Reception to this structural change was positive because it fostered collaboration and shared responsibility, relieving the burden on any single agency.

Elements of the shared management model

Group Decision Making: The YAB Taskforce, made up of YHDP-funded agencies, supported recruitment of YAB members and YAB meeting facilitation. The task force met approximately six times during the year: twice during the recruitment process to prepare and select members, and once before each of the four YAB meetings to confirm the agenda. Each YHDP-funded agency contracted with and paid one YAB member. Because each agency managed a member, they held a specific role within the YAB, fostering a sense of shared purpose. This resulted in more buy-in for planning related to the YAB's work.

Dedicated staff: The agencies were supported by one staff member who provided administrative support for recruitment, communications, and meetings. Having dedicated staff to organize the YAB was key to the success of the shared model. It simplified the process for the agencies, making them more comfortable participating. The YAB Taskforce decided that the GRCoC lead agency would staff both the YAB and the task force. Because they provided the administrative oversight and to mitigate potential conflicts of interest, the GRCoC lead did not contract a YAB member.

Setting Expectations: Before recruiting new YAB members, the YAB Taskforce met for a series of meetings to clearly define member roles, determine meeting objectives, and build processes for identifying and resolving issues. YAB Taskforce members again felt comfortable participating in the shared management model because their concerns related to management were addressed before forming the YAB. Once the YAB started, YAB members understood what was expected of them through an orientation and contract paperwork.

Meeting cadence: In 2025, the YAB met in person for four quarterly meetings. The meeting dates were shared during recruitment, and staff confirmed any changes with all members. Having fewer in-person meetings lowered contracting costs and reduced the staffing needed. It also meant that each meeting could be intentionally planned to meet specific learning and outcome objectives. YAB members were highly engaged, participating fully in every session. However, the infrequent meetings meant that YAB support to the GRCoC was largely limited to funding compliance and may have restricted opportunities for deeper connections and learning.

Positive Outcomes

Recruitment: All agencies were responsible for recruitment, sharing the opportunity via flyering and posting social media. YAB Taskforce members focused on recruiting young people who were served by youth outreach, shelter, and housing programs in Richmond. Sixteen individuals applied, and five individuals were selected for membership. These individuals came with lived knowledge of Richmond's homeless services system because they had interacted with it.

Accomplishments: There were many federal policy changes in 2025. The YAB was kept updated with changes in order to make and approve needed funding and programming decisions. Since the YAB relaunched, the GRCoC has formed new connections leading to monthly case conferencing for youth who have aged out of foster care and other youth related initiatives.

Future Goals

Member retention: During 2025, one member left the YAB and two others had inconsistent attendance due to life circumstances, leading to low attendance at one meeting. Because the YAB is composed of young people who recently experienced homelessness, membership and attendance will likely fluctuate. The YAB Taskforce is planning protocols to onboard new members throughout the year and finding ways to support current members through crises.

Member engagement: The original intent was to provide YAB members with professional development training during the meetings; however, that plan had to be set aside to address immediate issues. YAB members have expressed interest in doing more and youth programs are interested in receiving feedback from the YAB, causing the YAB Taskforce to discuss potentially expanding the board's activities.

Conclusion

Overall, the shared management model, which distributes responsibility across agencies, was effective for the GRCoC. In 2026, the YAB Taskforce agreed to continue the model with two YHDP-agencies contracting an extra YAB member. The group worked together to recruit four new members, focusing again on participants from their respective agencies. One member continued from the previous year, making a total of five YAB members. All members participated in orientation and continue to engage with the YAB. The YAB will participate in five meetings this year, one more than 2025.

The YAB relaunch demonstrates that a shared management model can successfully sustain youth engagement efforts when responsibility, communication, and administrative support are clearly structured. It may be a useful model to explore for communities with strong cohesion between YHDP-funded agencies. If creating a shared model, prepare for success by defining the roles of YAB members and YHDP-funded agencies as well as identifying who will staff the administrative functions of the YAB.



This case study was compiled by Jewel Goode, VCU MSW intern at Solutions Sandbox. Jewel collected information by participating in YAB meetings, reviewing historical documents, and interviewing key stakeholders related to the YAB. Solutions Sandbox provided consulting and staffing support for the YAB and YAB Taskforce through the time period covered in this case study.