

# 2020 Livingston Warming Center Feasibility Analysis

## Executive Summary

### Intro

## Feasibility Analysis

### Introduction

Since 1975, we have been instilling hope, developing resources, designing solutions, and changing lives. At Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), we envision a place where poverty has no impact because opportunities and quality of life are equally afforded to everyone.

As a Community Action Agency, we are tasked to help isolate gaps in community services then design and support solutions to meet those needs. We rely on partners, volunteers, and donors to help equip, primarily those with lower incomes, with tools and resources to achieve self-sufficiency. We work in partnership to provide essential services, quality of life opportunities, and an environment for growth in a manner that is fiscally responsible, with integrity and compassion.

On any given night, 9-10 Park County neighbors are sleeping outside, or place not meant for human habitation (2019 PiT survey). Community partners recognized this gap in crisis services in the local housing continuum and asked for action. HRDC responded piloting the Livingston Warming Center 2019/2020.

The Warming Center model is a low-barrier, seasonal, temporary shelter that offers a warm, safe place to stay for neighbors experiencing a housing crisis. The model is a community funded model meaning if the community financially supports the Center, the doors will remain open. A typical season spans from November to March, prioritizing shelter funds for the coldest months of the year. Hours of operations are 7pm to 7am. Guests can check in from 7pm to 10pm. Lights out at 10pm and lights on at 6am. Barriers to accessing shelter are not imposed, however all guests must agree to abide by behavioral expectations centered around safety, dignity, and respect for all. Partners, donors, and volunteers help keep costs down by supply donations and shift assistance.

The Warming Center operated at 119 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Unit B with a capacity to sleep 8 guests in 3 bunkrooms. Staff and volunteers welcomed guests, provided a warm place showcasing the integrity and compassion of Livingston.

During the 2019/20 season pilot we provided a warm, safe place to sleep to 34 neighbors.

### Budget

The Livingston Warming Center is a 100% community funded seasonal shelter model. It was only able to open due to generous donors and volunteers, Park County Community Foundation \$11,000 grant, United Way \$5,000 grant, and a \$14,235 commitment of funds from HRDC.

<b>Livingston Warming Center Pilot Operating Budget for 2019/2020</b>		
<i>Budget to Actual</i>		
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>	7/1/2019-6/30/2020	Jun-20
Donations	\$ 49,000.00	\$ 41,959.27
Fundraiser	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 257.00
United Way	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
PCCF	\$ 11,000.00	\$ 11,000.00
HRDC	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 14,234.55
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 90,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 72,450.82</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Salaries	\$ 54,106.78	\$ 41,195.47
Fringe Benefits	\$ 7,025.77	\$ 6,112.86
Utilities	\$ 6,300.00	\$ 939.90
Insurance	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 557.55
Rent/Repairs	\$ 7,260.00	\$ 10,410.03
Fundaising Expense	\$ 500.00	\$ 309.97
Outreach	\$ 500.00	\$ 144.00
Space/Communication	\$ 599.99	\$ 1,384.05
Supplies/Equipment/Misc.	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,073.35
Travel	\$ -	\$ 1,468.87
Legal	\$ 200.00	\$ -
Recognition	\$ 534.72	\$ -
Allocation	\$ 7,972.75	\$ 7,854.77
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 90,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 72,450.82</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ (0.00)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

The total cost of the pilot includes opening for 4 of the coldest days in October and closing 2 weeks early due to COVID-19.

To save on staffing costs, for the 4 evenings that no guests had checked in by 10pm, the shelter closed.

#### Outcomes

34 Neighbors found a place of dignity, respect, and integrity to stay safe from the cold Montana weather this winter thanks to generous community partners and donors.

HRDC strives to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. Although the primary goal of the Warming Center is to provide a resource so our neighbors without a home at this time would not die

outside due to cold weather, we were also able to connect 9 neighbors with housing counseling and an additional 4 guest achieved housing stability without housing counseling.

Staff at the Warming Center were able to help connect a vet to resources so he could return to his hometown, three guests were able to connect with transitional housing associated with behavioral health, a youth was able to enroll in HRDC’s Blueprint Youth Transitional home, a young man was able to achieve housing with roommates, another guest was on the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) waitlist and was able to utilize her voucher to move into a home, and another guest was connected with friends that could help out with temporary housing.

*This pilot season, a young man started to access shelter after a loss of familial relationships. He had simultaneously lost his employment, spent two weeks in jail and experienced homeless for the first time. That is a lot of huge life events happening all at once and would be overwhelming for anyone. The staff at the Warming Center were able to offer shelter, food, resource navigation, and a listening ear. After a long day of searching for jobs and housing, the young man was excited to tell staff about his progress and success. After listening, the staff on duty said, "I am proud of you". We learned those simple words were not something this young man grew up hearing. That moment was a turning point, it filled him with self-worth and he grew more confident that this phase of his life would soon be over. He only used shelter for a few short weeks, found gainful employment, and obtained a home. This young man did everything on his own with only the guided support of shelter staff. He would like to return someday to either volunteer or help staff the warming center so he too can lend a listening ear to someone else.*

Table: Livingston Warming Center 2019/20 Season Stats Summary

Total Guests this Season:	34	Women Guests:	14
Average Guests per Night:	2	Number of Veterans:	2
March Average guests per Night:	4	Season High:	6
Families:	1	Nights in Season:	144
Closed due to no guests :	7	Beds nights:	321
Season Cost:	\$72,451	Cost per person:	\$2,131
Cost per stay:	\$226	Cost per night:	\$503

Although most nights guests went to bed early, there were evenings that were social and supportive. Guests could enjoy a movie, crafting and puzzles with staff and volunteers, and enjoy a nutritious Meals on Wheels meal.

Many community partners and volunteers donated linens, cleaning supplies, socks, food, furniture, movies, books, games and puzzles, and their time to help take care of our neighbors. This was detrimental to keeping costs low.

The Warming Center was an opportunity for the many generous community member and community partners to engage in a project together, a true example of a community that bands together to take care of their neighbors. Below is a short list of examples of this community effort:

- Meals on Wheels – provided meals.
- Michael McCormick and Food Resource Center – food, supplies.
- Livingston Health and First Interstate Bank– both hosted a quarter drives so we could wash linens.
- Supply drive held at Town and Country.
- Various community members – dropped off cleaning supplies, puzzles, movies, and basic hygiene supplies.

### Challenges

Piloting a seasonal emergency shelter did not come without its challenges. Community education, raising funds to keep the doors open and lights on, lack of work force available, and a global pandemic were all hurdles to overcome for the 19/20 pilot.

Education of what a seasonal shelter is and who the people of Park County that would utilize were came with stigma and misunderstanding. However, the surrounding businesses and attendees of the informational townhalls were supportive, understanding, and genuinely concerned about their fellow community members. The Warming Center pilot was well received as an essential service. Education in the form of outreach and engagement regarding the monetary needs to run a seasonal shelter was challenge, primarily due to lack of staff and as a pilot, lack of data to report.

We struggled to meet staffing needs at the Livingston Warming Center throughout the season, consistently short 1.5 FTEs. There was lack of qualified applicants in the candidate pool. Challenges primarily being the overnight hours and seasonality. Hourly wages for regular employees were set \$17.

A large part of fundraising is community education and outreach which takes time. For the pilot season, we focused on operations and community outreach. Our fundraising and donations goal was \$54,000 and came up \$12,000 short. A community member had spent many organizing a fundraiser on behalf of the Livingston Warming Center that was scheduled in March but was postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 caused us to close two weeks prior than expected. Due to CDC guidelines on congregate living arrangements, our Warming Center Advisory Committee determined that at that time, we were no longer able to provide a warm, safe place.

### Projected Need

According to the 2019 PiT survey, on any given night, 9-10 of our neighbors are experiencing homelessness. These numbers include residents of Park County who were staying at the Bozeman Warming Center, Aspen, we were able to locate in cars, outside, or other place not meant for human

habitation. This number does not include those “doubling up” or “coach surfing”. National, statewide, and local trends tell us that of those experiencing homelessness, around 50% will access emergency shelter. Based on this collective information, we expect that 5 neighbors per evening would utilize the Warming Center if it were available.

The number of clients funded for Rental Assistance for Housing Stabilization to exit homelessness has grown 23% annually in recent years. Mirroring that need, we project to see an increase of 20% of those accessing shelter. If emergency shelter were available for the 20/21 Season, we’d expect to serve 41 neighbors.

### Recommendations/Solutions

HRDC has prepared an overview of three different community responses for moving forward:

1. No action
2. Hotel/motel vouchers
3. Warming Center model

#### *Option 1: No action*

The risks and impacts of no action are explored in the first option for Park County.

If action is not taken, while there would not be an operational budget for a program, there would still be costs to the community.

Park County has residents experiencing homelessness and the risks of health complications and death of our residents is a cost to consider. Without shelter, especially in the wintertime, their lives are at risk. In 2008, a man utilizing a U-Haul as his shelter died due to exposure to the severe cold in Bozeman. This prompted the opening of the areas first ever shelter.

For those that have daytime work schedules but happen to be without a home, shelter provides a contact point for service engagement when they otherwise would not have the opportunity to engage unless they took time off work. Service engagement is essential to making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time.

The 2018/19 Bozeman Warming Center data showed that 20% of their guests were of a “transient” population, they were new to or did not live in Gallatin County. 80% of those guests were from Park County. In the winter, without shelter, families were driving the pass at night just to access a warm, safe, place to sleep at the nearest shelter. They then returned early in the morning to go to work and/or to get their kids to school. Residents traveling to another community with winter weather is a risk.

In partnership with Montana Healthcare Foundation, HRDC released a research study in 2017, *Assessing Community Costs of Chronic Homelessness in the Gallatin Valley*, which concluded that “our community spends \$28,305 annually per homeless ‘super user’ with many of these costs unreimbursed or paid with taxpayer dollars.” The costs analyzed in this study incorporated costs from law enforcement agencies, social service providers, and health care providers. Chronic homelessness is defined as a resident experiencing homelessness for over a year and has a diagnosed disabling condition. The study also concluded that there was a 73% reduction in healthcare costs alone once residents were in a home. Although those experiencing chronic homelessness is a smaller demographic, 3 of our guests in the pilot

season were experiencing chronic homelessness and 1 was able to obtain housing with the assistance of HRDC.

There is a cost to homelessness in our community if no action is taken.

*Option 2: Hotel/motel vouchers*

Prior to the Warming Center pilot, the only option for shelter was hotel/motel vouchers. The local churches pooled money and donated to local law enforcement to help provide a nightly shelter for those that needed. Law enforcement reported the vouchers they were able to provide were insufficient of the need as they ran out of funds to offer this service quickly.

With a low number of guests last season, operationally, each stay cost \$226. Utilizing a state rate of \$96, hotel/motel vouchers may be a cost-effective option.

Below is the operational budget for hotel/motel vouchers based on 5 guests per evening, for a season of November 01, 2020 to March 31, 2021, utilizing a state rate of \$96/night. It incorporates the estimated administrative time to coordinate and connect guests with this service.

<b>Livingston Hotel/Motel Vouchers Operating Budget for 2020/2021</b>	
<i>Budget to Actual</i>	
	<b>Budget</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>	7/1/2020-6/30/2021
Donations	\$ 67,093.11
Fundraiser	\$ 10,000.00
United Way	\$ -
PCCF	\$ -
HRDC	\$ -
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 77,093.11</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Salaries	\$ 2,852.72
Fringe Benefits	\$ 622.28
Hotel/Motel Vouchers	\$ 72,480.00
Outreach	\$ 500.00
Fundraising expense	\$ 500.00
Space/Communication	\$ 138.12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 77,093.11</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ (0.00)</b>

The costs per night would be \$511 and cost per stay, including administrative time, would be \$102 per stay.

The Warming Center model opens shelter at 7pm and closes at 7am, however, guests are not only experiencing homelessness in the evening. The hotel/motel voucher option would allow for 24-hour access to a shelter.

With CDC COVID recommendations on congregate living, sheltering in hotels/motels would provide adequate social distancing and shelter in place measures for families and individuals.

The foreseen challenges for this option are the ability to raise adequate funds for hotel/motel vouchers, finding adequate hotel partners willing to work with the program, limitations of vouchers, and less housing staff engagement.

Community partners and donors have expressed concern over hotel/motel vouchers. Due to this feedback, we believe fundraising for hotel/motel vouchers would be a significant hurdle and are uncertain if there would be enough community support to fund this service delivery option.

HRDC helps provide medically necessary hotels and through the pandemic, have tried to offer shelter in place options in hotels. Hotels have denied rooms to HRDC for these efforts. We believe that we would be able to work with a local hotel to provide a block of 5 rooms throughout the season. This means that regardless of how many people utilize the room, the cost per evening would still be \$511.

This model limits availability to 5 vouchers per evening. Limitation and prioritization of vouchers would be put in place and may limit those that are able to access.

Without staff onsite, there would be a loss in housing engagement. HRDC has been able to show that partnering housing staff and navigators with homeless services, guests engage in housing services 80% more than without. The more engagement the more quickly guests can move out of a housing crisis and into permanent, stable housing.

### *Option 3: Season Shelter*

A seasonal shelter could meet the projected need of the those experiencing homelessness that would access shelter during the coldest months of the year in Park County.

The Warming Center model has the largest operations budget and the highest cost option. The proposed budget would offer a safe, warm place for up to 8 guests per evening (includes CDC recommendations for COVID-19 spacing).

<b>Livingston Warming Center Operating Budget for 2020/2021</b>	
<i>Budget to Actual</i>	
	<b>Budget</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>	7/1/2020-6/30/2021
Donations	\$ 75,000.00
Foundations	\$ -
City of Livingston	\$ -
Fundraiser	\$ 9,000.00
United Way	\$ -
PCCF	\$ -
HRDC	\$ 18,650.29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 102,650.29</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Salaries	\$ 66,472.24
Fringe Benefits	\$ 9,504.86
Utilities	\$ 2,000.00
Insurance	\$ 1,000.00
Rent/Repairs	\$ 7,260.00
Fundraising Expense	\$ 500.00
Outreach	\$ 500.00
Space/Communication	\$ 931.46
Supplies/Equipment/Misc.	\$ 2,000.00
Travel	\$ -
Legal	\$ 200.00
Recognition	\$ 500.00
Allocation	\$ 11,781.72
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 102,650.29</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>

This model would be more flexible in how many people we serve on any given evening. This would cost \$680 per evening and with the projected average of 5 guests per evening, would cost an approximate \$136 per stay.

Although this option is the costliest, we believe this effort is most likely to garnish community support due to staff engagement, volunteer engagement, community engagement, and incorporated housing service connection.

Staff at the Warming Center strive nightly to provide a dignified, supportive environment that not only meet basic human needs but also helps move our neighbors out of crisis and into stability. Aside from a warm place to stay guests will have access to nutritious foods, hygiene services, volunteer engagement, and clothing.

The community has shown overwhelming support to donate facility supplies and volunteer time. We expect the Warming Center to be a continued community engagement activity.

The foreseen challenges for a Warming Center model are the ability to raise adequate funds, limited shelter access, COVID-19 congregate shelter requirements limit activities and capacity, and maintaining adequate staffing.

Although we believe this option to be more likely to be supported by the community, financially supporting through donations and fundraisers over \$100,000 annually may be a challenge. Continued annual financial support from local municipalities and foundations would help decrease the fundraising and donation demand on a smaller community but would be expected to increase community financial support.

Hotel/motel vouchers provide 24 hours access to shelter while the guest has a voucher. The Warming Center model only provides nightly shelter from 7pm to 7am.

CDC recommendations for congregate shelter would maintain capacity to 8 guests per evening but would eliminate shared use spaces such as the common room. There would likely be many changes to the previous service delivery to help prevent COVID-19 spread and exposure. The Bozeman Warming Center has COVID-19 Policies and Procedures and HRDC would adapt those to accommodate the Livingston Warming Center facility.

The largest operational cost, but greatest asset, of a Warming Center model is the employees. A competitive wage will attract qualified applicants to work the seasonal overnight position. Hiring qualified staff assure guests are accessing a welcoming warm place that showcases the integrity and compassion of Livingston. The more engagement the more quickly guests can move out of a housing crisis and into permanent, stable housing. During the pilot, it was a challenge to recruit the qualified individuals to be fully staffed and that is expected to continue to be problematic due to the seasonality and hours of the position.

#### Next Steps

We will work with Park County Housing Coalition, CRC, HRDC Board of Directors, and other partners to identify a strategic plan to address homelessness in Park County, informed by data from this analysis.