

# Seattle-King County Continuum of Care Board

## Application Form

Please complete the entire form and email to [CoC.Questions@kcrha.org](mailto:CoC.Questions@kcrha.org)

### Full Name and Pronouns:

Bella Irons they/them

### Preferred Contact Information:

Phone:	+1 (561) 888-9009
Email Address:	bellaironsprofessional@gmail.com
Preferred Method of Contact: (Circle One)	Email
Zip code:	98029
Are you able to commit up to 15 hours a month for the 2 year duration? (Circle One)	Yes

### Question 1: Please describe your understanding of a Continuum of Care (CoC).

The Continuum of Care (CoC) as described in the Seattle-King County Continuum of Care Governance Charter is a structured coalition designed to address homelessness in the region by creating an integrated system to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. This charter outlines the governance structure of the CoC under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, detailing the roles and responsibilities of various committees and boards within the CoC. It emphasizes collaboration among local organizations and stakeholders, the delegation of certain regulatory responsibilities, and a commitment to equity and community input. The CoC aims to be responsive to the regional environment and effectively connect with broader efforts to tackle homelessness by aligning with federal, state, and local laws, and by regularly updating its charter to reflect the evolving needs of the homeless population within its geographic area.

### Question 2: What motivates you to be on the CoC Board?

Please share your specific field of interest related to the CoC.

My motivation to serve on the CoC Board is deeply rooted in both my professional background and personal experiences. As a domestic violence survivor and a former car-camping graduate student, I've faced the harsh realities of homelessness firsthand, which fuels my commitment to social justice and systemic change. My extensive experience in developing strategic partnerships and managing impactful projects, including securing substantial funding and resources for vulnerable populations, has prepared me to contribute effectively to the CoC's mission. By joining the CoC Board, I aim to leverage my personal insights and professional skills to help create a homelessness response system that is not only efficient but also compassionate, ensuring that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring for all members of our community.

**Question 3: What skills and experiences will you bring or draw upon as a member of the CoC Board?**

Please list any experiences or familiarity you have with accessing homeless housing services or program delivery, funding, the Continuum of Care, or other relevant skills.

As a member of the CoC Board, I will bring a unique blend of personal experiences and professional skills that are directly relevant to the challenges and solutions in homeless services. My firsthand experience as a single LGBTQIA+ parent navigating homelessness through a domestic violence shelter, combined with the complexities of cross-state family court proceedings, has given me deep insight into the legal and social services system. I have successfully accessed state and private funds for essential needs ranging from legal aid to pediatric care, demonstrating my ability to navigate and leverage resources effectively. My second stint with homelessness, as a digital nomad (car-camping) while completing my Master's degree, further honed my resilience and resourcefulness, engaging with religious-based safe spots and mental health services. These personal journeys through the continuum of care equip me with the empathy, understanding, and practical knowledge to advocate for comprehensive, accessible services and improvements within the CoC framework.

**Question 4: Describe your vision or understanding of a successful CoC Board.**

A successful CoC Board, as I envision it, embodies a robust combination of diverse expertise, shared responsibility, and transparent governance aimed at making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring within the community. Drawing upon principles outlined in the Seattle-King County Continuum of Care Governance Charter, the board should function not only as a regulatory body but also as a dynamic, adaptive entity responsive to the evolving needs of the homeless population. My understanding, shaped by my personal experiences with homelessness and professional interactions with similar support frameworks, emphasizes the importance of a board that integrates lived experiences with strategic decision-making. This integration ensures that the board's actions reflect the real challenges faced by those it aims to serve, promoting equity and justice. Additionally, the board must foster strong inter-agency collaborations and maintain a transparent, accountable approach to its initiatives, ensuring all stakeholders are informed and engaged in the pursuit of its mission.

**Question 5: Describe your leadership experiences.**

For example, other boards you have been a part of, community groups or leadership activities.

Throughout my career, I have demonstrated a strong commitment to leadership and community engagement, particularly within contexts requiring strategic oversight and collaborative problem-solving. As the Executive Director of the Academic Web3 Conference, I led initiatives that significantly improved the conference's visibility and impact, managing large-scale projects and fostering partnerships with major academic institutions. In my role as CMO at the UBCS, I orchestrated the reestablishment of critical partnerships such as the National Breast Cancer Society, successfully navigating complex stakeholder environments to secure significant funding and resources for wellness initiatives. These experiences are complemented by my role as a tech consultant where I advised on substantial fundraising efforts and strategic expansions. My leadership style is inclusive and results-oriented, focusing on building consensus and empowering team members to contribute their best through clear communication and shared goals.

**Question 6: How does systemic racism impact housing and the root causes of homelessness?**

Systemic racism significantly impacts housing and the root causes of homelessness by perpetuating inequalities in access to resources, employment, healthcare, and affordable housing. Research consistently shows that people of color, particularly Black and Indigenous individuals, are disproportionately represented among the homeless population. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, systemic factors like historical housing discrimination, disparities in wealth accumulation, and unequal treatment by the criminal justice system exacerbate vulnerabilities to homelessness. For example, redlining and discriminatory lending practices have historically restricted access to home ownership and affordable housing for many people of color, leading to higher rates of homelessness among these groups. Publications such as Matthew Desmond's "Evicted" (\*MARS) highlight how low-income African Americans are more likely to face eviction, further destabilizing communities and reinforcing the cycle of poverty and homelessness. Addressing these systemic issues requires targeted policy interventions that not only increase housing affordability but also tackle the broader racial inequities that drive homelessness.

Reference: The Milwaukee Area Renters Study (MARS): dministered by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center (UWSC) in 2009-2011, the MARS survey collected questionnaires from more than 1,000 households, administered via in-person interviews. The survey collects data on tenants' current housing situations, neighborhood characteristics, civic engagement, material hardship and social suffering, and social networks. Found at: <https://scholar.harvard.edu/mdesmond/mars-data>

**Question 6: Reviewing the Theory of Change what is one way you apply this theory in your everyday life and work? Briefly, describe how you will center the theory of change on the Board and how you plan to uplift the communities you represent and support.**

**KCRHA Theory of Change:**

If we create a homeless response system that centers people with lived experience, then we will be able to focus on responding to needs and eliminating inequities, in order to end homelessness for all.

In my everyday life and work, I actively apply the Theory of Change by emphasizing the inclusion and centering of voices with lived experiences in decision-making processes. As the Executive Director at the Academic Web3 Conference, I integrated the perspectives of diverse community members into our conference planning and initiatives, ensuring that our content and outreach strategies were both inclusive and impactful. This approach not only enriches our program offerings but also fosters a deeper understanding of diverse needs, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable solutions. On the CoC Board, I plan to continue advocating for this principle by ensuring that our strategies and decisions are informed by the real-world experiences of those most affected by homelessness. My goal is to uplift the communities I represent by actively seeking their input, ensuring their perspectives lead our discussions, and advocating for policies that directly address systemic inequities. By doing so, I aim to create a more responsive and equitable homeless response system that not only meets immediate needs but also works towards the long-term goal of ending homelessness for all.

**Question 6: Optional: Is there any resource you would need in order to fully participate as a CoC Board Member?**

No

**Affiliation (please note any that apply):**

Lived experience of homelessness (circle)	Yes
Public or Private Funder (circle); If yes, please note organization	No Organization:
Intersecting System – i.e. Behavioral Health, Child Welfare, Criminal Justice, etc. (circle); If yes, please note system & organization	No System & Organization:
Faith Based Organization or Partner	No
Homeless Housing and/or Service Provider (circle) If yes, please note organization)	Yes Organization: Humble Design
Any other affiliations you'd like to note:	No

**Sub-Population Representation (please check any areas in which you have specific experience or expertise):**

Families, Chronic Homelessness, Single Adults (Not experiencing chronic homelessness and non-Veteran), Domestic Violence, Other

**Region (please check any areas in which you have specific experience or expertise):**

Regional (King County - Non-specific)

**Identity (optional):**

How do you identify your race?	two or more races
Sexual Orientation	Queer
Age	50
Disability Status	N/A

**Agreement and Signature**

**I affirm that my application responses are true and complete to the best of my knowledge.**

Name ( <i>typed or signature</i> )	web-form@smartsheet.com
Date	04/29/24 11:21 AM

**When you have completed this form, please submit the final to the KCRHA at  
[CoC.Questions@kcrha.org](mailto:CoC.Questions@kcrha.org). Thank you!**