

# Sonoma County Lived Experience and Advisory Planning Board (LEAP)



**Committee members:** Rebekah Sammet, Chair | Chessy Etheridge, Co-Chair | Heather Jackson, Secretary | Nicole Catoe-Sweeney | Albert Bruin, Time Keeper | Victoria Yanez | Mary Ruffatto | Karla McLaren | Juanita Butterfly | James Di Stefano | Alice Linn | Jessica Wolfe

December 2, 2022

To: Continuum of Care Board

RE: Request for CoC Board to create 2 additional, designated Lived Experience seats on the CoC Board

The Lived Experience Advisory and Planning (LEAP) Board requests the CoC Board consider creating two more (new), designated seats on your board for people with lived experience of homelessness. These would be *in addition* to the existing number of seats on your board, rather than redesignating two existing seats.

We also ask that at least one of the seats not have a time limit on years since homeless, due to the lengthy learning curve for the homeless system of care: the time it takes to learn all the key people, funding sources, wide range of programs, etc. for a lived experience CoC board member to be fully effective.

There are several reasons for our request, which we believe would benefit the CoC Board, Sonoma County's homeless system of care, and unhoused people in our county.

## Benefits

1. Have immediate access in your board meetings to 2 additional Lived Experience (LE) board members, to inform the board from multiple LE perspectives in discussions before votes.
2. Increase LE diversity on the board.
3. The seats could be designated to include different unhoused experiences useful for the board's information:
  - a. an LE Shelter Seat, for someone who has experienced living in one or more shelters in
  - b. an LE Vehicle Seat, for someone who has lived in a vehicle in our county
  - c. an LE Outdoor Seat, for someone who has lived outside in our county.

Or a seat for someone who is in substance recovery, and another for someone who is a senior or age 50+ (or other special populations).

4. The 3 total LE CoC Board members could divide up the committees between them, to allow at least one CoC LE person to be on each of your committees. Currently, it is too much workload for one LE board member volunteer to be on all the committees.
5. Share the overall workload and learning curve among more LE people on your board. No one LE person can represent the diverse experiences of all ~3000 unhoused people and their different experiences in Sonoma County and do justice to the board, the homeless system, and to the unhoused.

We believe that greater representation of LE people on the CoC Board would assist the Board with wise spending decisions and reducing homelessness in our county.

Please advise us on the process for our request to be considered.

Sincerely,  
Lived Experience Advisory and Planning Board