

ABOUT THE ECOSYSTEM

Mecklenburg County Community Support Services (CSS) in partnership with UNC Charlotte Urban Institute (UI), produced the Housing & Homelessness Ecosystem of community organizations as a first step in what is envisioned as creating a culture of continuous improvement. An Ecosystem describes a group of interconnected elements both individually and by their interrelationships in a defined area. The typical ecosystem is a feedback loop, wherein dependencies and other conditions stressing one group can stretch an entire system to the breaking point. Observing, defining, and quantifying the discrete elements; cataloging their interconnectedness; and standardizing the tools for studying and evaluating the system is the only way to ensure the system is fully maximized for efficiency and effectiveness. The Housing & Homelessness Ecosystem provides standardized definitions; identifies roles and responsibilities across the continuum; quantifies housing capacities; and outlines funding sources.

METHODOLOGY

In 2018, CSS shared information about the Ecosystem project with the community, including housing and homelessness service organizations, disseminating information via multiple networks and distribution lists.

Participation in the Ecosystem Project is voluntary. The Ecosystem includes all housing and homelessness organizations that provide temporary housing assistance to households experiencing homelessness or housing instability; or to organization that provide permanent housing assistance (financial assistance and/or a physical housing unit) to help households experiencing homelessness or housing instability access or sustain housing. Since the threshold for eligibility in the Ecosystem is the provision of housing assistance, organizations that provide supportive services only (including street outreach) are not included.

After initial information about the project was shared, UNC Charlotte UI developed a survey to collect information about housing and homelessness service organizations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The survey was distributed to all known housing and homelessness service organizations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Information submitted by were reviewed, updated and verified. Each participating organization was given the opportunity to complete a final review prior to public release of the data. Updates to information and data are made annually or as necessary.

DATA

Ecosystem data originates from multiple sources. Information about the organization, including contact information, program and household type served and funding source is provided by the participating organization. For organizations part of the Continuum of Care's (CoC) Housing Inventory Count (HIC), the number of units listed on the Ecosystem is updated annually to align with the latest HIC. The HIC is submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). Organizations not part of the HIC send their data directly. These organizations are asked to provide a snapshot of their housing unit inventory for the same period used to capture the HIC.

