Backbone
CHARTER

A. PURPOSE

Backbone serves as the Youth Action Board of the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance (Alliance), the Continuum of Care in the Marion County and Polk County region.

The purpose of Backbone is to:

- Partner with the Alliance and its committees to support coordination, planning, and improvement of services that prevent and address youth and young adult homelessness.
- Ensure youth and young adults with lived experience are meaningfully involved in system and program design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Advise the Alliance Board on policies, programs, and practices that impact youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Conduct outreach and connect with youth and young adults experiencing housing instability to help identify barriers and link youth to services and resources.
- Promote education and community awareness about the causes, realities, and solutions to youth and young adult homelessness.
- Monitor and communicate the impact of housing and homeless services for youth and young adults in the region.
- Backbone is authorized and supported by the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance's Board of Directors.

Backbone members will accomplish this work by:

- Developing and implementing an annual Backbone workplan with measurable goals aligned with the Alliance Strategic Plan and youth priorities, and regularly reviewing progress on those goals.
- Evaluating the Backbone charter, purpose, and workplan annually and recommending updates to the Alliance Board when needed.
- Participating in Backbone, Youth and Young Adult (YYA), and Alliance Board meetings to share youth perspectives and provide recommendations on programs, policies, and services.
- Conducting outreach and engagement with youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability to gather feedback, identify barriers, and connect youth to resources and services.
- Promoting youth leadership, representation, and lived experience by recruiting and supporting youth members and ensuring youth voices remain central to decision-making.
- Supporting partnerships, education, and funding opportunities that expand youth

engagement, community awareness, and services for youth and young adults.

B. MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP. Backbone is comprised of voting YYA members, ages 11-to-24 years. Members shall have lived experienced with any form of homelessness or housing instability, including residing in emergency shelters, couch surfing, transitional living, runaway, or human trafficking. Members shall, to the best of the community's ability, be reflective of the population of YYA experiencing homelessness. Backbone shall consist of no less than five (5) and no more than twenty (20) members. Members shall primarily reside in the Marion County and Polk County region.

In special circumstances, Backbone members may request a leave of absence in writing by themselves or by a caseworker on their behalf. During the leave of absence, the members will not be counted for quorum or voting purposes. Upon resolution of the special circumstances, the Backbone member may resume full voting status.

APPOINTMENT. The Alliance Board appoints members to Backbone based on recommendations from Backbone. Backbone shall use an Alliance board-approved application form and review process to screen and recommend prospective applicants.

STAFF SUPPORT. Alliance staff shall support Backbone, ensuring notes are taken at all meetings, legal notice is provided, and that CoC policies and processes are followed. Staff shall maintain a list of Backbone membership and their ages. Staff shall post the names of members to the Alliance webpage per the Governance Charter, Article II.E.1. Staff shall arrange for translation services, upon request.

COMPENSATION. Members' personal and basic needs are assessed and met regularly through personalized resource navigation and shared partnerships in the system. Incentives for engagement may include meals/food, gift cards, transportation support, swag, and raffle prizes. Meals will be provided at meetings. Backbone members will be compensated for their time spent attending meetings via monetary stipends, to the extent resources are available.

TERMS. Backbone members shall serve two-year terms of membership. Members are encouraged to seek reappointment if the member is still within the approved age range and continues to be engaged.

OFFICERS. Backbone shall nominate a President to the Alliance board for official appointment. The Backbone President shall facilitate Backbone meetings and participate in leadership and planning meetings. The President shall serve one-year terms and may be reappointed annually by the Alliance Board. Backbone shall appoint other officers as needed, such as Vice President and Secretary.

OFFICER ROLES.

The President will fulfill the following duties:

a) Facilitate meetings and ensure conversations directly meet Backbone's purpose;
b) Lead others by their example of respect, dignity, and kindness;

c) Ensure members are empowered to share their stories, advice and feedback;
d) Work with staff to prepare agendas (Alliance staff);
e) Help establish and track annual priorities and workplan;
f) Ensure follow through on committee tasks;
g) Communicate and liaise between Backbone and the Alliance Board; and
h) Help recruit and onboard new members.

The Vice-President will support the President in accomplishing their duties and will be responsible for their duties if the President is unable to fulfill them for any reason.

The Secretary will work with Backbone leadership and staff to:
a) Assist Alliance staff and Backbone President in the creation of agendas
b) Keep track of attendance at meetings and report to Alliance staff; and
c) Review meeting minutes to ensure accuracy before distribution.

All officer positions will:
a) Meet one week prior to regularly scheduled Backbone meetings with Alliance staff to plan and prepare meeting agenda; and
b) Support president in accomplishing their duties such as attending Alliance Board Meetings.

VOTING. Backbone decisions shall operate on a consensus basis. However, members may request a majority vote on specific issues. Recommendations to the Alliance Board will be made by majority of votes. Each member shall have one vote on each matter submitted to a vote of Backbone members. A majority is defined as 50% plus one of the appointed, voting membership. Members on leave of absence status will be considered nonvoting until full membership status is resumed. Members with a potential or actual conflict of interest must declare the conflict and announce its nature. The member must then refrain from taking any official action, except when the member's vote is necessary to achieve a quorum or approved by Alliance staff and Backbone President to participate.

RESIGNATION. Resignations by Backbone members shall be submitted in writing, by the Backbone member or a caseworker on behalf of the member, to Alliance staff or Backbone President, who will forward the resignation notice to the Alliance Board for the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

TERMINATION. The Alliance Board may remove any member when it determines it is in the interest of the Alliance to do so. Three unexcused absences in one year by a Backbone members shall make that member eligible for termination.

C. MEETINGS

MEETINGS. Meetings shall occur at least monthly. Backbone may decide to meet more frequently at the call of the President and Staff. Backbone is a public body subject to the public meetings and records laws as stated in ORS Chapter 192. All meetings are open to the public. The meeting agenda will be distributed to members and through public notice at least 24-hours prior to a meeting. Accommodations will be made, compliant with the Americans with

Disabilities Act, as requested.

QUORUM. A majority, defined as 50% plus one, of the appointed, voting Backbone membership will constitute a quorum for the transaction of all business at meetings. Members may attend either in person or by conference call so long as persons in attendance and on the telephone can both hear and communicate with each other. Members attending by telephone or similar contemporaneous means may be counted towards achieving a quorum. Members on leave of absence status will not be counted towards a quorum.

D. CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Backbone members, staff support, and Backbone advisors shall adhere to Alliance Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct standards as described in the Governance Charter Article III, sections A and B:

CONFLICT OF INTEREST GENERAL PROVISIONS. A conflict of interest is a situation in which Backbone members or one of their family members have a personal or financial interest that compromises or could compromise the Backbone members' independence of judgment in exercising their responsibilities to the Alliance. It is the position of this Alliance that conflicts of interest shall not compromise the Alliance's work and that even the appearance of a conflict shall be avoided in all circumstances.

CODE OF CONDUCT GENERAL PROVISIONS. Backbone members are expected to observe the highest standards of ethical conduct in the execution of their responsibilities, to conduct themselves with courtesy and respect, and to refrain from harassment, intimidation, discrimination, and physical or verbal abuse.

ADHERENCE TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY. Backbone members are expected to adhere to the Alliance's Conflict of Interest Policy, as described in Article III of the Governance Charter and in a separate policy document, which requires the member to minimize conflicts of interest; disclose ethical, legal, financial, and other conflicts; and remove themselves from decision-making if they would otherwise be called on to act on a conflict involving themselves, their family members or entities with which they or their family members are closely associated.

ANNUAL DECLARATION. Backbone members are to annually receive a copy of the Conflict of Interest Policy. Backbone members are to annually receive a copy of the Code of Conduct and acknowledge receipt.

F. CHARTER AMENDMENTS

PROCESS. This charter may be amended at any Alliance Board meeting by a majority vote of the appointed, voting board membership. Copies of proposed amendments will be available for review at least one week prior to the board meeting at which the proposed amendments are considered. The Alliance Board will seek review and recommendation by Backbone of any amendments to the charter, unless circumstances require an immediate change. In the latter

situation, Alliance staff will provide an explanation of the circumstances and provide opportunity for comments and input prior to and as part of the board meeting.

FREQUENCY OF REVIEW. Backbone will review this charter annually and submit any recommended revisions to the Alliance Board.

Revised August 12, 2024
Revised November 7, 2022
Revised March 10, 2026 – Add officer roles and detailed purpose