

Asotin County Alliance for the Unhoused (ACAU)

*Addressing the homelessness crisis within Asotin County through
community partnerships, shared resources,
and strategic assessment*



Business Plan

Approved by the ACAU Board
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Asotin County Alliance for the Unhouse
PO Box 323
Clarkston, WA 99403
ACAUBoard@gmail.com

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Business Plan

Executive Summary

A lack of affordable housing and temporary shelters for those experiencing homelessness has left hundreds of Asotin County residents with little to no options for overnight shelter, with many choosing to sleep in city and county parks, parking lots, wilderness areas, and business outdoor alcoves. Among this group, many struggle with health conditions—mental and physical—that compound their inability to seek assistance or interact with others. Basic needs such as shelter, food, and hygiene go unmet, further isolating and alienating them from achieving any sort of higher standard of living or modicum of success. Conversely, many Clarkston city residents have grown uneasy and unsettled by the growing presence of unhoused people congregating and sleeping in community parks and recreation areas. City resources, such as the police and fire departments, are stretched thin as they respond to calls and complaints stemming from the increasing tensions and incidents. If left unaddressed, tensions will continue to rise possibly leading to violence. If left unhoused, people will succumb to exposure, starvation, and dire neglect. We can no longer stand by and passively allow this to happen. The homelessness crisis within Asotin County is an emergency event for the entire community.

Organizational Background

The Asotin County Alliance for the Unhoused (ACAU) was formed as a direct response to the homeless crisis. Led by a steering committee consisting of key personnel from behavioral health providers, local government officials, local business owners, and concerned Asotin County residents, the ACAU proposes to establish a dedicated low-barrier Sleep Center for unhoused people in need of shelter. Modeled after similar Sleep Centers in Walla Walla, Moses Lake, and Eugene, OR, the proposed Sleep Center consists of twenty Conestoga-style individual huts that can be locked during the day. While without electricity, these huts have proven to provide adequate sleeping quarters during the winter.

ACAU Board of Directors & Steering Committee

The current ACAU Board of Directors is comprised of four Asotin County residents, and will expand to include twelve individuals by the end of 2025. Ideal candidates include those with relevant and strategic backgrounds to best advance the ACAU in its mission and vision.

The ACAU Steering Committee is comprised by the ACAU Board, three employees from Quality Behavioral Health, the Clarkston Chief of Police, an Asotin County Commissioner, and the pastor from First Christian Church.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Mission: To help address the current and emergent homelessness crisis within Asotin County through community partnerships, shared resources, and strategic assessment.

Vision: To help foster a robust community-centered support network and temporary shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Core Values: Respect, Empathy, Responsibility, Collaboration, Sustainability

- **Respect:** People deserve to be treated with dignity no matter their economic status or current living situation.
- **Empathy:** Recognizing the human being within every person, and the universal feelings we all share.
- **Responsibility:** When people are held to account and are responsible for their choices, they are empowered to assert more control over their own lives.
- **Collaboration:** Creative partnerships create stronger support systems for our clientele, while shared resources reduce financial burdens and capacity limitations with community partners.
- **Sustainability:** Meeting the needs of the present without compromising those of the future.
- **Resiliency:** Helping people to adapt and learn from difficult experiences.

Goals & Objectives

In order to bring our vision to fruition, we must first secure land for the Sleep Center and funding for initial start-up costs. The goals below are short-term, and reflect the current need and task at hand. Long-term goals aligning with overall vision can be found in the ACAU 3-5 Year Strategic Plan.

- **Goal 1:** Provide a low-barrier shelter for unhoused people within Asotin County and the LC Valley.
 - **Objective 1.1:** Identify and purchase land for Sleep Center.
 - **Objective 1.2:** Obtain and build Conestoga huts.
- **Goal 2:** Raise funding to cover 1-2 years of operating costs.
 - **Objective 2.1:** Identify and/or apply for private, state, and federal funding.
 - **Objective 2.2:** Targeted community fundraising.
- **Goal 3:** Establish initial management team.
 - **Objective 3.1:** Hire Program Director.
 - **Objective 3.2:** Create volunteer pool and identify Volunteer Coordinator.

Milestones & Timeline

Goal	Objective	Milestones	Responsible Party	Timeline
Provide a low-barrier shelter for unhoused people within Asotin County and the LC Valley	Identify and purchase land for Sleep Center	Procurement of land	ACAU Steering Committee	Ongoing
		Lease agreement with Asotin County	ACAU Board & Asotin County Commissioners	1-2 months
		Site assessment and preparation (ground-leveling, landscaping, utilities, fencing)	Asotin County Commissioners & Public Health	4-6 months
	Obtain and build Conestoga huts	Purchase hut materials	ACAU Steering Committee	2-4 weeks
		Organize community volunteers to help with assembly	ACAU Steering Committee	1-2 months
Raise funding to cover 1-2 years of operating costs	Identify and/or apply for private, state, and federal funding	Awarded grants covering start-up costs	ACAU Board	Ongoing
		Awarded grants toward operational costs	ACAU Board	
		Negotiate potential funding from local government (non-tax dollar) sources	ACAU Board	
	Targeted community fundraising	Produce donor brochures and targeted media marketing	ACAU Steering Committee	1-4 months; ongoing
		Provide information and link for donors on website	ACAU Steering Committee	1-4 months; ongoing
		Establish dedicated fundraising event	ACAU Board & Program Director	Ongoing annual basis
Establish initial management team	Hire Program Director	Successful hire and onboarding of ACAU Program Director	ACAU Board	3 months
	Create volunteer pool and identify Volunteer Coordinator	Successful recruitment of twenty (20) community volunteers with a (non-paid) Volunteer Coordinator in place, Social Work background preferred	ACAU Board & Program Director	1-5 months; ongoing

Sleep Center Start-up Budget

This budget is for initial start-up costs and does not reflect ongoing expenses with the exception of insurance.

Expenses	Amount
Land Acquisition	500,000
Alliance Liability Insurance	3,186
City Liability Insurance	2,000
Fencing	60,000
Sewer or Septic Setup	15,000
Conestoga Hut Kits x 10	40,000
Grand Total	<u>\$620,186</u>

Land Acquisition: The Asotin County Commissioners have local document recording fee funding available to purchase and secure land to be used for the Sleep Center. This land will remain under the ownership of the County, and leased to the ACAU for Sleep Center use.

Alliance Liability Insurance: Western National Mutual Insurance Company with an annual premium of \$3,186 – which would cover general liability, professional liability and directors and officers liability.

City/County Liability Insurance: TBD depending on final site location.

Fencing: Pricing is subject to change based on final square footage of property.

Sewer or Septic Setup: Dependent on Sleep Center location (city or county) and access to established sewer lines.

Conestoga Hut Kits: Huts are priced at approximately \$4,000 each and require assembly. Community volunteers will be utilized to build and set up huts. Total cost includes estimated taxes and shipping & handling fees.

Community Profile

Clarkston is located within Asotin County of Eastern Washington, and sits along the Idaho state line. Over two-thirds of the est. 22,285 residents in Asotin County live within, or just outside of, Clarkston city limits. While a few unincorporated towns do exist within Asotin County, the only two towns (Clarkston and Asotin) are within five miles of one another, making Clarkston the central hub for community services, shopping, and healthcare facilities. Across the state line that runs along the Snake River is Lewiston, ID. This area is colloquially referred to as the LC Valley. The job market for this area largely consists of manufacturing, construction, hospitality and retail, healthcare and education, government positions, and social services; \$39,329 is the median household annual income for individuals.

Asotin County has a large senior population, with 24% of residents aged 65 years and older, and a median age of 45. In regards to housing, people 55 years of age and older occupy and/or own well over half of all available units. About a third of people 65 and older are still active in the workforce. The poverty rate in Asotin County is at 16.1% (compared to WA rate of 10%), most of whom are under the age of 40. Nearly twenty-three percent (22.6%) of people under the age of 18 live in poverty, or to put it another way, one in five children. Earnings in Asotin County trend low, with 40% of people earning \$50,000 or less. In terms of affording housing, a high number of people are struggling. The median gross rent in Asotin County is around \$1,000, which accounts for more than a third of low-income individual and family earnings. To summarize: low wages, high rent, and lack of affordable housing is pushing more people into homelessness than before.

In addition to the economic factors, a lack of accessible healthcare providers and social services contribute to the increase in homelessness within Asotin County. Local healthcare providers, behavioral health providers, and social service agencies are at max capacity in caseloads, with new patients and clients waiting several months before receiving care and services.

Industry Analysis

The basic purpose of a shelter is to provide temporary safe indoor sleep or overnight accommodations to those without permanent housing at the time. In this context, temporary refers to a person's housing status, and not their length of stay. A shelter is not a residence, and occupants are guests. The term shelter often implies an indoor facility containing either separate rooms or a large rooms with cots and bunks. For the purpose of the proposed program, we use the term Sleep Center as each guest cot will be within its own individual hard-sided tent.

Homeless shelters typically come in three varieties: no-barrier, low-barrier, and high-barrier.

- A no-barrier shelter accepts anyone who arrives for services, ideal for emergency circumstances.
- A low-barrier shelter has some restrictions and rules, such as age limits and behaviors.
- A high-barrier shelter is more restrictive with strict rules on mandatory sobriety or employment.

As of March 2025, there are very few low-barrier homeless shelter options within the LC Valley. A temporary no-barrier warming shelter located in Lapwai, ID, is available during winter months when temperatures drop below 32° F. This location is approx. 16.8 mi from Clarkston, and while free transit is

available between north Lewiston and the warming shelter, space is limited and arriving in time for transit remains out of reach for many.

Other shelters within the LC Valley include:

- Family Promise of Lewis Clark Valley, a high-barrier program that works with faith-based groups to provide food and lodging resources for families with children in need of assistance.
- YWCA of Lewiston and Clarkston provides low-barrier shelter for individuals and families escaping abusive situations.
- LC Valley Resource Center, a high-barrier shelter for youth between the ages of 12-17.
- Union Gospel Mission is currently building a high-barrier faith-based shelter for homeless individuals in need of recovery services.

The ACAU Sleep Center would be the only low-barrier shelter for people over the age of 18 that would not require employment, sobriety, or commitment to faith-based practices. While the above organizations all serve a great purpose with even greater impact, the gap for those without housing who cannot meet the high-barrier standards remains. Current organizations and programs would not be competitors, but rather community partners, as together we can address separate areas of need. Ideally, the ACAU and the other shelter programs will work together to direct people to the appropriate program tailored for their specific needs.

Market Analysis

Support, or wrap-around, services for people experiencing homeless are available within the LC Valley, but most are at maximum caseload capacity. Many behavioral health providers have waiting lists with time ranges between four to ten months before initial intake. Some agencies are limited in the assistance they can provide by both scope and timing. For example, a housing voucher (rental assistance) that is valid for 60 days is of no use when there are no available or affordable rentals during that period. Likewise, a person who qualifies for food assistance may not be able to participate if they do not have a place to store unprepared foods. Often a physical or PO Box mailing address is a requirement for these programs. These agencies are equipped to meet the needs for people who currently have, or at risk of losing, permanent housing. Once an individual loses housing, barriers to available services increase.

Current social and support services would be ideal community partners, with the ACAU Sleep Center providing a mailing address and point of contact for unhoused clients utilizing their services. Local organizations include:

- Quality Behavioral Health
- Community Action Partnership (CAP)
- Southeast Washington Alliance for Health
- Idaho Reentry Services
- Disability Action Center
- Red Door Kitchen
- The Bridge

- Lewiston Salvation Army
- St. Vincent de Paul of the LC Valley
- CAP Food Bank
- Asotin County Food Bank
- CHAS Health
- Veterans Outreach Center

Customer Analysis / Target Demographic

The Point in Time (PIT) Count is a national survey collected at the state and county level that tracks the number of unhoused people on a given night in January. Surveyors may go out into known locations where unhoused people are found as well as collect responses from community locations such as libraries, hospitals, and social services offices. The PIT Count is in no way indicative of the actual number of unhoused people, but rather provides a floor (i.e. least amount). Per the 2024 PIT Count, 125 people reported as being without permanent shelter. This can include people who are “couch-surfing”, staying in hotels via a voucher program, or staying with relatives. Of the 125, 100 % reported having no shelter at all, meaning they were sleeping outdoors. Again, this is just the people who were recorded during the PIT Count; the WA Dept. of Commerce reports up to and over 530 people without housing in Asotin County.

Program Assessment

The Sleep Center was modeled after a similar (and successful) program established by the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless in 2015. The ACAU Steering Committee consulted with the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless Executive Director, its current and former board members, and Walla Walla city officials on program specifics, community impact, and potential issues. Originally operating only from 7:00 PM until 9:00 AM, the Walla Walla Sleep Center expanded operating hours to a 24-hour format during the COVID pandemic. Over time it became clear that permitting all-day access to the Sleep Center contributed heavily to many guests successfully transitioning out of homelessness.

The ACAU Board and Steering Committee will continue to consult with the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless, as well as local governments and residents within Asotin County to ensure compliance with local codes and procedures, as well as alleviate any concerns from the community.

Sleep Center Operations & Management

The Sleep Center will initially consist of twenty Conestoga-style individual huts, or hard-sided tents, that can be locked during the day. The interior is approx. 60 sq. ft. providing enough room for a twin bed, a small bedside table, and suitcase or backpack. They will not have either plumbing or electricity, but will have a window to allow for natural light. These huts will be placed within a fenced-enclosed area, preferably located away from heavy residential neighborhoods, but close enough to bus stops and grocery stores.

At least one mobile home unit will be installed to provide office space for the Program Director, shower and laundry facilities, as well as space for wrap-around services. Initial restroom facilities will be provided through portable toilets. Packaged food and produce will be available, but guests will be not be permitted to use kitchen facilities or open fire for cooking. Arrangements for prepared foods will be explored with community partners.

Hours of operation may initially consist of overnight use only—from 7:00 PM to 9:00 AM—however, may extend to all-day use when funding is secured. Security will be provided during Sleep Center hours, and guests will be required to follow established rules for the protection and safety of themselves and others. Rules include no drugs or alcohol on the premises, no occupants under the age of 18, and no violence of any sort.

The Sleep Center will initially be staffed by a paid Program Director and volunteers. The Program Director will report to the ACAU Board of Directors and coordinate with wrap-around services partners. Security will be provided through contracted services, and will report to the Program Director. Volunteers will be under Program Director supervision, who will report to the ACAU Board of Directors on a monthly basis.

Annual Operating Budget

Estimated first-year annual operating budget includes one paid staff, contracted services, and utilities. Food and onsite laundry service will not be provided in the first year. Sleep Center guests will have access to running water and shower facilities.

Expenses	Amount
Program Director Salary (@ \$40/hour)	57,600
Program Director Fringe (@ 30% x salary)	17,280
Security	106,000
Volunteer Background Checks	800
Internet (@ \$100/mo)	1,200
Water/Sewer/Septic/Portapotty (@ \$350/mo)	4,200
Garbage (@ \$120/mo)	1,440
Insurance	5,000
Electricity (@ \$130/mo)	1,560
Maintenance & Groundskeeper	8,000
Grand Total	<u>\$ 195,080</u>

Program Director: The Program Director will be responsible for volunteer recruitment and management, operations oversight, and other duties as assigned. This position will work closely with the ACAU Board of Directors, local police and fire departments, QBH, and other community partners to ensure compliance and the safety of Sleep Center guests and nearby neighbors. This is anticipated to be a full-time, fully-benefitted position.

Security: Security will be contracted for overnight service, and will report to the Program Director.

Maintenance & Groundskeeper: Basic hut maintenance and grounds keeping will be provided by volunteers, however a small reserve will be set aside each year for instances where professional contracted assistance is needed.

Sleep Center Funding Plan

Funding for initial start-up costs will be secured through fundraising activities, grant funding, and available funding from Asotin County. Any funding provided by local government will not impose an increase in taxes or levies on the public, and instead come out of funds that have already been earmarked for purposes such as this.

Identified granting foundations and agencies include:

- Murdock Charitable Trust
- Innovia Foundation
- Inatai Foundation
- Building Changes
- Greater Health Now
- Lewis-Clark Valley Healthcare Foundation
- DeAtley Family Foundation

Community Partners

The success of the Sleep Center will rely heavily on community partners, volunteers, and leveraged resources. Partners include social services, food banks and soup kitchens, and healthcare professionals, etc.

- Quality Behavioral Health
- CHAS Clinic
- Interlink Volunteers
- Red Door Kitchen
- Salvation Army
- Asotin County Sheriff's Office
- Asotin Police Department
- Clarkston Police Department
- Clarkston Fire & Emergency Services
- WorkSource

Community Impact & Benefit

A frequent concern over providing shelter and community resources for unhoused people is the cost, i.e. why should I have to pay for someone else's mistake? What is often overlooked or unaddressed is the actual cost a community pays when people are unhoused. Taxpayer supported agencies such as police and fire/EMS departments suffer the brunt of these costs, stretching department personnel time and resources thin.

Roughly 7% (663 out of 9,810) of the Clarkston Police Department dispatch calls in 2024 stemmed from the two larger homeless encampments within city limits. The first encampment located in the Port district near Walmart, came into existence in November 2023 and was disbanded in February 2024, generating around 369 calls in its duration. An estimated 80 people were living in tents there at its height. The second encampment formed shortly thereafter in Foster Park and remained occupied until September 2024. An average of 12 people per day slept in the park; the highest recorded number of occupants was 21. Between April and then, an estimated 478 dispatch calls were placed, despite the far lower occupant population.

On average, it costs the City about \$127.50 per dispatch, which includes officer personnel time, dispatch service, and indirect costs. Approx. \$47,048 in resources was spent responding to calls from the Walmart encampment, and approx. \$60,945 for Foster Park calls. In other words, over \$107,993 in tax payer dollars went toward addressing the homeless crisis within a 14-month period. This amount does not include calls in other parts of the City, nor the cost for any arrests that may have resulted from the calls. The approx. cost to the City per day/night in jail is \$103. For perspective, the cost of jailing the 12 people who slept in Foster Park for a single night would have been \$1,236.

Hospitals also bear financial burden. An emergency department (ED) visit can cost upwards of \$1,400 per hospitalization. On average, an unhoused person might visit the ED up to five times per year. Hospitals are required by law to treat anyone presenting with an emergency regardless of ability to pay. In some cases, patients cannot be released until certain conditions are met, thus extending their length of stay. A single unhoused person without a stable source of income or insurance can cost a hospital \$7,000 annually. Just the reported PIT Count number of 125 could incur an annual \$875,000 in medical costs alone; the actual amount is far greater, with hospitals regularly reporting between \$1.5 to \$2 million in charity care annually.

Social services agencies offer hotel vouchers (that can cost up to \$80 per night) for unhoused individuals and families, but this is neither a sustainable nor permanent solution. It may take a homeless person several months to a few years to address barriers impacting their lives before they can "get back on their feet".

With these figures in mind, the Sleep Center could greatly reduce the cost to tax payers and local organizations currently expending time and resources addressing this crisis. Under the ACAU's proposed plan, the cost to shelter ten Sleep Center guests would be \$62 per person, per night without using any tax payer dollars.