



Housing Access and Support Alliance Workgroup Agenda
February 27, 2025, 1:30PM – 3:00PM
Columbia Public Library (100 W. Broadway, Columbia, MO 65203) and virtually via Zoom

Meeting Objectives:

- Learn more about At-risk Renters' Connection to Housing (ARCH) program
- Review and finalize information sheet content
- Continue workgroup plans for 2025

Attendees: Ella Gross (Tower Grove Community Development Corporation), Conrad Hake (Love Columbia (LC)), Sara Stone (LC), Lori Acton (LC), Roy Kroeger (Boone County Resource Management Department), Carter Stephenson (Columbia/Boone County Public Health and Human Services), Becca Jones (Voluntary Action Center (VAC)), Senica Smith (VAC), Tionna Lawson (VAC), Tammy Hickem (Salvation Army Harbor House), Randy Cole (Columbia Housing Authority), Onni Flint (Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA)), James Bayless (Fresh Start Sober Living Programs), Nick Foster (City of Columbia City Council), Carmelita Wright (Salvation Army), Christina Devine (Boone County Family Resources), Verna Laboy (Boone County Community Services Department (BCCSD)), Victoria Woods (BCCSD), Kerby Webb (BCCSD), Emilio Ayala Youngblood (BCCSD), Joanne Nelson (BCCSD)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Verna welcomed all attendees and opened the floor for introductions.

2. Overview of ARCH by Tower Grove Community Development Corporation

Ella Gross from Tower Grove Community Development Corporation was introduced. Ella provided information about the St. Louis based organization, which is a non-profit corporation focused on affordable housing, and their program. There are three arms of the program. First, there is an arm that focuses on using rehab and vacant properties. Secondly, there is an arm that focuses on new construction. The third arm is HomeScreen, which is the program Ella presented on in more detail.

HomeScreen software was created through grant funding in 2018 and is used for tenant screening. This program expanded its services during the Covid pandemic when people needed help keeping their housing during financial distress. Ella showed the group how to navigate the HomeScreen webpage. The software is similar to other websites such as Airbnb and Zillow to help keep people familiar with how to navigate. Housing providers are not charged to use the service.

Individuals searching for housing have the option to pay a single application fee when applying to multiple properties within the software system. HomeScreen is designed so social service providers can assist with this process. A feature allows for applicant pre-screening, which includes national criminal background and national eviction reports. Ella explained that many housing providers saw the pre-screening as a primary benefit in using this system.

Ella shared that the next step for growing this software to other communities would be to get more landlords to sign up for HomeScreen. To expand the program to Boone County, housing providers



would need to express interest in voluntarily registering for the program with approximately 50 properties to be listed initially.

3. Follow up from last meeting

a. Discuss draft information sheet

The group reviewed the information sheet, which was drafted at a previous meeting, and discussed possible changes that can be made to it. It was suggested that the “Ready to Rent?” document include a definition of gross and net income. Members also suggested more content for tenant messaging and identified a second category as “You’ve Signed a Lease.” The two topics could then be presented as a double-sided handout. Tips for tenants included updating their mailing address, paying utilities on time, understanding their lease, landlord communication, maintenance concerns, being a good neighbor, understanding housing scarcity, and the legal consequences of evictions.

b. Assigned tasks

Verna shared information Gina reported from her contact with Columbia Apartment Association, noting their willingness for future collaboration.

4. Next Steps – Continue 2025 Workgroup Plan

The group reviewed the workgroup plan. In line with the proposed workgroup action of “Watch for ordinances and policies that impact leasing opportunities,” Verna shared that there is a draft ordinance “Prohibition of Rental Application Fees with Provisions for Processing Fees for accepted Applicants” which was brought to the workgroup’s attention by Nick Foster. This draft ordinance addresses application fee collection practices and was developed by Dan Hanneken, Executive Director of In2Action. Nick shared that the ordinance has not been brought to Columbia City Council. Verna suggested that next steps could include monitoring how this draft progresses. Individuals requested to have a copy of the draft ordinance shared with the workgroup.

5. Closing

a. Partner Updates

- Randy Cole (Columbia Housing Authority) explained federally funded programs are uncertain of their funding and support systems right now. There will be no new Section 8 Vouchers released for this year.
- Love Columbia will have a Rent Well Class, Saturday, March 8, 2025, from 8:30am-12:30pm.

b. Comments and Questions

Next Meeting: March 27, 2025 from 1:30PM – 3:00PM at Boone Electric Community Building – Amp Room (1413 Rangeline, Columbia, MO 65201) or via [Zoom](#).