California Interagency Council on Homelessness

TO:	Members of the California Interagency Council on Homelessness
FROM:	Cody Zeger, Director of Statewide Policy
DATE:	February 21, 2023
SUBJECT:	Feedback from the Advisory Committee on Local Implementation of the State Action Plan

On February 7, 2023 the Cal ICH Advisory Committee held a meeting in which they discussed the State Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness. In addition to an overview of the plan's key elements, the group discussed the FY 21-22 Action Plan Implementation Progress Report that Cal ICH staff were working to complete. In order to provide additional context to that progress report, Advisory Committee members were asked to provide their feedback on the State Action Plan's implementation. Specifically, they were asked to respond to the following questions for each of the plan's five Action Areas:

1. How are the State Action Plan's Objectives or Action Areas being implemented in local communities?
2. What are examples of successful implementation of activities that we can learn from, expand, or refine?

Advisory Committee Members provided both written and verbal feedback regarding identifying successful implementation of State Action Plan activities as well as areas for expansion or refinement. The following memo summarizes the results of the Cal ICH Advisory Committees' observations and lists verbatim responses by Action Area. This summary will be presented to the Council during its meeting on February 27. A small group of Advisory Committee members will also be present to answer questions from Council members on this feedback.

Action Area 1: Strengthening Our Systems to Better Prevent and End Homelessness in California

Activities focused on pursuing racial equity in response to homelessness and housing instability; engagement and partnership with people with lived expertise from experiences of homelessness; supporting interjurisdictional and regional planning; partnerships to strengthen outcomes related to education, employment, income, and assets; disaster preparedness and response; and communications and public awareness.

In Action Area 1, the Advisory Committee lifted up State funded programs that were successful in addressing equity by serving Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal communities. Additionally, Committee members highlighted the effective partnerships created across agencies to implement these programs.

Areas for refinement and expansion included the need for continued funding for staffing and operations to support permanent housing and other interventions, the desire for statewide goals and metrics to assess progress, and the hope to address differences across state funding and program requirements.

The following table includes comments provided directly from the Advisory Committee regarding Action Area 1.

Table 1. Cal ICH Advisory Committee Member Comments – Action Area 1

Action Area 1: Successful Implementation
• **Homekey** is one of the best programs we have access to. We increased our PSH units immensely due to Homekey. Issues that still remain is long-term sustainability.   • **State's rent relief program** was an example of an effective partnership. State created the initial program but was open to feedback from cities that led to refinement.   • With **Tribal set asides**, Tribal entities were able to directly serve a population that is historically underserved and overlooked.   • There was great **collaboration among multiple agencies** during the COVID crisis that generated many lessons that can be replicated in future crises.
Action Area 1: Areas for Expansion or Refinement
• Not enough **support for administrators** is a huge problem and will cause entities to walk away from opportunities.   • **CalAIM** is great but the **reimbursements** are not that great and it essentially created another parallel system to the COC. Confusing for consumers.   • Would like to see **statewide racial equity goals**, many communities are addressing but lack KPIs to understand progress.   • We need to properly recruit, train and retain workers that assist clients. There is often **too much turnover** and this contributes to knowledge loss in the system.   • **Decreasing Point-In-Time (PIT) Count = decrease in funding = increase in PIT**   • Rather than focus on action areas, I would like to talk about **the state's primary role as a funder.** E.g. how agencies have bespoke requirements that cause operations problems on the ground.

Action Area 2. Equitably Addressing the Health, Safety, and Services Needs of Californians Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

Activities focused on addressing health and safety needs and increasing access to State-supported services and programs for people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

In Action Area 2, Committee members highlighted models of success that could be replicated in other communities. San Francisco's experience with Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) provided helpful lessons for future voucher utilization. Additionally, the

Committee mentioned the emergency funding that allowed communities to quicky move people into shelter and provide critical services.

Areas for refinement and expansion included the need for increased inclusion of people with lived experience of homelessness in decision making as well as making concerted efforts to address the needs of populations who are particularly vulnerable when unsheltered.

The following table includes comments provided directly from the Advisory Committee regarding Action Area 2.

Table 2. Cal ICH Advisory Committee Member Comments – Action Area 2

Action Area 2: Successful Implementation
• Project Roomkey (PRK) and Emergency Solutions Grant – CARES Act (ESG-CV) allowed **Tribal Entities** to quickly respond with supplies and emergency shelter during spikes of COVID in Tribal communities. • **Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF) grant** is a great resource and should stick around or a few years • **San Francisco's targeting of people living unsheltered** in the Bay View for Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs), lessons learned through that process of helping people to navigate the voucher and lease up process.
Action Area 2: Areas for Expansion or Refinement
• **Broadening the definition of "homelessness"** for rural communities. Homelessness in Urban (LA) areas is not the same as in Rural (Laytonville) • Adding **more lived experience voices** at the table driving accessibility to resources for varying populations impacted by homelessness. • Making **specific efforts to address the needs of people who are particularly vulnerable** when unsheltered, including women and LGBTQ individuals who are not attached to a family. • **Partnering with local universities** and their mobile nursing/medical units to tag along during street outreach efforts to provide medical care.

Action Area 3: Expanding Communities' Capacity to Provide Safe and Effective Sheltering and Interim Housing

Activities focused on expanding the supply of safe, housing-placement focused sheltering and interim housing models and addressing health and services needs of people staying within such programs.

In Action Area 3, Committee members lifted up the State-funded programs that have been critical to getting people off the streets, including the Returning Home Well Program and the Veteran Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program. They also mentioned the importance of the recent investments in programs that were able to get people off the street quickly.

Areas for refinement and expansion included the type of shelter that should be brought online, the need for health resources in shelter settings, and the need for permanent housing to be able to place people into.

The following table includes comments provided directly from the Advisory Committee regarding Action Area 3.

Table 3. Cal ICH Advisory Committee Member Comments – Action Area 3

Action Area 3: Successful Implementation
CalVet/ California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Veteran Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program has added significant housing stock.   **The Returning Home Well Program** quickly increased interim housing with supportive services. This was done quickly and effectively between state and local systems of care.   - State has funded programs (**Homekey, PRK, ERF, clinically enhanced bridge housing**), which decreased proportion of unsheltered population, but low exits to permanent housing (30% or less)
Action Area 3: Areas for Expansion or Refinement
- Expanding **access to mental health resources** inside shelter settings would be helpful.   - Possibly need to take a hard look at **traditional congregate sheltering** to recognize that it may not have great outcomes. Does it perpetuate homelessness?   - Looking at the **ratio of non-congregate shelter to congregate shelter** for vulnerable populations as we look to expand availability.   **Shelters/Navigation centers struggle to house undocumented individuals**. Homekey units are an option for the couple years that are covered by the State. After that we don't know what to do.

Action Area 4: Expanding and Ensuring Equitable Access to Permanent Housing in Our Communities

Activities focused on strengthening Housing First approaches and expanding permanent housing opportunities through development strategies, short- and long-term rental assistance, and other rehousing activities.

In Action Area 4, Committee members highlighted the success of Project Homekey, which allowed communities to quickly build new permanent supportive housing units. Additionally, Los Angeles County's Housing 4 Health program was also mentioned as a model for success and replication.

Areas for refinement and expansion included support for greater collaboration and leveraging of new resources (such as Cal AIM funding), planning for continued financial sustainability of new permanent housing, and the need to include accessibility in housing.

The following table includes comments provided directly from the Advisory Committee regarding Action Area 4.

Table 4. Cal ICH Advisory Committee Member Comments – Action Area 4

Action Area 4: Successful Implementation
• **Homekey** is a great example of how to expand Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). More work needed on financial sustainability. • **San Diego's ability to utilize all EHVs** is a model that could be looked at across the state for other subsidy programs. • **LA County's Dept. of Health Services Housing for Health** is a model of moving people quickly from the streets into housing through master-leasing agreements.
Action Area 4: Areas for Expansion or Refinement
• As we think about equitable access to housing, let's not forget about **accessibility at all levels**, which helps disabled people use tools that are helpful • Successful permanent housing sites need **ongoing operating subsidies** for security and on-site staff. (Maybe $500 per unit per month) Rental assistance is not enough. • Need to look at examples of **successfully leveraging MediCal/CalAIM funding** for robust supportive services. • **Streamlined funding, permitting, and utility company responses** must be in place to reduce development timelines • Helping agencies maintain skilled housing staff. **Turnover of staff hurts**. • Homekey is a great example of how to expand PSH. More work needed on **financial sustainability.**

Action Area 5: Preventing Californians from Experiencing the Crisis of Homelessness

Activities focused on reducing entries into homelessness as people exit and/or receive services through State-funded programs and systems and enhancing communities' capacity to provide targeted homelessness prevention and diversion services and assistance.

In Action Area 5, Committee members commented on the success of rent relief programs and the targeted assistance to underserved communities, including Tribal Entities and youth and young adults.

Areas for refinement and expansion included providing additional support for people exiting jails and prisons and utilizing targeted prevention strategies (such as housing problem solving).

The following tables are comments provided directly from the Advisory Committee regarding Action Area 5.

Table 5. Cal ICH Advisory Committee Member Comments – Action Area 5

Action Area 5: Successful Implementation

- **COVID 19 Rent Relief Program** helped thousands not fall into homelessness
- **HHAP funds for youth** serving programs demonstrate that flexible investment in prevention works and that CA can reduce youth homelessness by addressing crisis drivers.
- **Tribal Entities** were able to utilize the US Department of Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Program to provide rent/utility relief and prevent homelessness.
- **Santa Clara, collaboration with community orgs** and targeting ERA to people below 30% AMI resulted in most resources going to households of color.

Action Area 5: Areas for Expansion or Refinement

- Affordable housing programs funded annually, and some prioritization for supportive housing. Can strengthen through **annual, ongoing operating and services $$**.
- **More funds for prevention**. Many folks end up on the streets when intervention could have happened to help prevent this or respond to this.
- State funded prevention has to be rigorously targeted to those who would become homeless without the assistance. More **research is needed to inform targeting**
- Emphasize and fund **Housing Problem Solving** specifically. The practice encourages households to develop their own self-sufficient solutions
- We need more **services and coordination** for those exiting jails and prisons.

Next Steps

The Council will hold a discussion on the FY 21-22 Action Plan Implementation Progress Report as well as this Advisory Committee feedback during its meeting on February 27. Council members will be asked to consider the following question: Based on this feedback and the information in the FY 21-22 Action Plan Implementation Progress Report, do you have any recommendations for the upcoming Action Plan update process to make our collective Action Areas and activities more effective at preventing and ending homelessness?

Additionally, this Advisory Committee feedback and suggestions will be utilized to update future versions of the Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.