



California Interagency Council on Homelessness

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To: Members of the California Interagency Council on Homelessness
From: Meghan Marshall, Executive Officer, Cal ICH
Subject: Proposed Update of the Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California
Date: May 24, 2023

Purpose

This memo provides background information regarding the proposed updates to the [Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California](#) (Action Plan). This update process has been informed by feedback provided by a variety of stakeholders and will be discussed at the May 31, 2023 meeting of the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Council).

Updating the Action Plan

The Action Plan was originally adopted by the Council in March 2021 and was updated with Council approval in September 2022. The 2022 update included five new Member Departments and more than 80 new activities through Fiscal Year 22-23. This update focuses on adding activities Council member agencies and departments will be working on during FY 23-24 to the existing plan. A multi-year update to the plan will be considered in the coming year.

Cal ICH staff, supported by consultant Matthew Doherty, began the current update process in February 2023, which has included conversations with every Council member department and agency, public input sessions, Tribal communities, external stakeholder groups, lived experience advisory boards, and a special presentation to the Advisory Committee to the Council. Cal ICH staff are now working with each member department and agency to reach agreement on Activities to be included within the updated Plan.

Next steps for updating the Action Plan include:

- Cal ICH staff will continue to refine Activities, in partnership with Council member departments and agencies through early July 2023.

- Cal ICH staff and Council departments and agencies will add Activities to reflect final budget and new statutes, as needed, through August 2023.
- Cal ICH staff will refine introductory and framing content within the Action Plan, to be completed by mid-August 2023.
- Council will engage in further discussion and consider recommendation for adoption of the updated Action Plan at the September 7 Council meeting.

Key Elements of Stakeholder Input

Cal ICH staff, supported by consultant Matthew Doherty, began the current update process in February 2023, which has included conversations with every Council member department and agency, public input sessions, Tribal communities, external stakeholder groups, lived experience advisory boards, and a special presentation to the Advisory Committee to the Council. Input received to date has been wide-ranging and diverse.

Cal ICH held two input sessions in April and May 2023, with over 100 members of the public from across the state. Input sessions began by asking participants to rank the Action Areas in order of recommended importance for State prioritization. The collective ranking is below.

- **Action Area 4:** Expanding and Ensuring Equitable Access to Permanent Housing in Our Communities
- **Action Area 1:** Strengthening Our Systems to Better Prevent and End Homelessness in California
- **Action Area 3:** Expanding Communities' Capacity to Provide Safe and Effective Sheltering and Interim Housing
- **Action Area 2:** Equitably Addressing the Health, Safety, and Services Needs of Californians Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness
- **Action Area 5:** Preventing Californians from Experiencing the Crisis of Homelessness

Additionally, when asked to rate the impact of State efforts regarding communication and the impact of funding on local capacity, input received primarily identified State efforts as "Not Impactful Enough" across each Action Area. After engaging in deeper discussion, an initial set of priorities for the State emerged. A summary of these priorities is included below.

- A consistent focus on addressing **racial disparities in homelessness** within State programs, including a focus on the **specific needs of Tribal communities**.
- Urgently increasing **permanent housing supply** for the success of investments into any element of homelessness response systems and to provide pathways out the system for people experiencing homelessness.

- **Ongoing, flexible resources** to be able to support a range of program models that meet the range of people's needs.
- Earnest **inclusion of people with lived experience** in State-level decision-making processes, program design and implementation, and communication strategies.
- **Streamlining requirements and processes** to help address the administrative challenges communities are facing, including policies, reporting requirements and data metrics, across all State homelessness and housing funding and programs.
- Investing in the **skills, wages, and capacity of the workforce** within homelessness response and housing programs to reduce burnout and turnover.
- Guidance and support to **align housing strategies with health and behavioral health strategies** to reach vulnerable populations and increase impact.
- Strengthening efforts to **prevent homelessness among people re-entering communities** from hospitals, jails, prisons, and other institutional settings.
- Interest in the state engaging in **expanded communications and educational efforts** to help support effective solutions in local communities.
- Further, stakeholders report that they perceive a need for:
 - **Purposeful and visible coordination and collaboration** across State departments and agencies;
 - **Robust and wide-reaching communication** to help communities understand how to align the many different programs and efforts being implemented independently by State departments and agencies; and
 - Purposeful and clear **leadership from the State to support local community efforts and partnerships**, including with Tribal communities, to help make the most progress they can.

The following subpopulations were consistently identified as groups requiring increased services and supports specific to their needs:

- Older Adults
- People with Disabilities
- Youth
- Domestic Violence Survivors and Survivors of Human Trafficking
- People with Co-Occurring Diagnoses

Cal ICH also held two Tribal listening sessions and provided a survey through which a variety of Tribal Communities and partners could submit feedback. Through this feedback it became clear that, Tribal Communities throughout California face a unique set of challenges, specific to each Tribe and community, in addition to the

barriers experienced by the general public. Regarding Tribal Communities in particular, feedback revealed that historical state-tribal relationships, including a history of harmful policies and programs for Tribal Communities in California, require additional efforts to rebuild relationships, better understand, and partner with Tribal Communities in their efforts to address homelessness. A summary of this feedback is below.

- Due to the unique historical, geographical, socioeconomic, legal, and cultural factors facing Tribes, **Tribal Communities have fewer resources** than other California Governments or entities, **lower capacity to access resources**, and **increased barriers** to address homelessness.
- **Rural locations and communities face particular challenges** when trying to access resources, including issues such as isolated locations, lack of usable land and infrastructure, and lack of employment opportunities.
- **Tribes are rarely included** by cities, counties, CoCs in their solutions to address homelessness, program design, and data collection.
- State set-aside **funding for Tribes needs to be specifically crafted** to meet the unique needs of Tribes. Funding streams that group Tribes with cities, counties, and CoCs are often inaccessible to Tribes. Funding streams from CDSS and Cal ICH (specifically, Tribal HHAP), were elevated as using successful strategies, while some others were reported to be largely inaccessible.
- State **outreach to Tribes needs to be more timely, respectful, and effective** for them to access state programs and resources, as well as build meaningful partnerships to address homelessness. A culturally responsive framing, gathered from genuine and individualized relationships with Tribes, in-person visits, and the hiring of state staff with specialized expertise, is necessary for the effective development and implementation of tribal programs and services.
- **Tribal communities are individual entities** and not all share the same issues and challenges. Feedback from one community may not necessarily apply to all.
- **Cultural sustainability** is greatly affected due to lack of housing within each Tribal community and impacts the future of Tribes.
- Streamlined support and **better State coordination across tribal funding opportunities** is needed to assist Tribes with limited capacity to navigate funding streams and programs. Differences between Federal and State policies as well as within State program opportunities can lead to confusion and prevent from leveraging funds. Some Tribes have given up seeking state funding sources after being denied for funding numerous times.
- **Cultural biases and misconceptions** regarding Tribal Communities negatively impact the effect programs can have. Some examples include a lack of institutions (e.g. non-profits, local governments, State departments, vendors, etc.) willing to work with Tribes for housing solutions, exploitation when institutions do work with Tribes, and significant resistance from local communities when homelessness solutions are proposed.

Council Meeting Discussion and Decision

Using the feedback received from the input sessions, as summarized above, Cal ICH staff have identified four areas in which Council members should consider strengthening the Action Plan. This can occur through adding new or expanded Activities to the plan, identifying strategies for measuring progress, or requesting further input from the Cal ICH Interagency Working Groups or the Advisory Committee.

The areas to focus on strengthening are:

1. Interagency coordination and collaboration (Action Area 1)
2. Racial equity and tribal engagement (Action Area 1, Objective 1)
3. Inclusion of people with lived expertise in policy making and program design (Action Area 1, Objective 2)
4. Communications and public awareness (Action Area 1, Objective 6)

Therefore, the Council's discussion at its May 31 meeting will focus on identifying existing work in these areas in order to foster dialogue between Council members about additional ways they could strengthen the Action Plan in response to this feedback. To spur this discussion, **Council members will be asked the following:**

- Please share relevant activities around *coordination and collaboration across State agencies and departments*.
 - Can you identify any opportunities for expanded coordination and collaboration that could be reflected in the Action Plan?
- Please share relevant activities around *racial equity and tribal engagement*.
 - Can you identify any opportunities for strengthened racial equity and tribal engagement that could be reflected in the Action Plan?
- Please share relevant activities around *utilizing guidance from people with lived experience*.
 - Can you identify any opportunities for guidance from people with lived experience that could be reflected in the Action Plan?
- Please share relevant activities around *increased communications and public awareness*.
 - Can you identify any opportunities for additional communications and public awareness that could be reflected in the Action Plan?

After the meeting, Cal ICH staff will follow up with staff at each Council member department and agency in order to identify ways they can strengthen their work in interagency coordination and collaboration, racial equity and tribal engagement, inclusion of people with lived expertise in policy making and program design, and

communications and public awareness. Cal ICH staff will attempt to capture these strategies to be reflected in the updated Action Plan and will identify other appropriate ways to move them forward (e.g. discussion at an Advisory Committee or Working Group meeting, facilitation of interdepartmental conversations, sharing resources, etc.)

Cal ICH staff plan to report on the progress toward strengthening these four areas of the Action Plan at the next Council meeting on September 7, 2023.