



California Interagency Council on Homelessness

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To: Members of the California Interagency Council on Homelessness

From: Meghan Marshall, Executive Officer, California Interagency Council on Homelessness

Subject: Next Steps for Advisory Committee Recommendations and Responses to Council Questions

Date: March 27, 2024

PURPOSE

This memo follows up on the recommendations Advisory Committee (Committee) members provided to the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (Interagency Council) at their September 7, 2023, meeting. Interagency Council members were asked if they had questions about the initial recommendations or required clarification or additional information from the Advisory Committee. Advisory Committee members responded to the Interagency Council's questions and Cal ICH staff have summarized those responses here. Additionally, this memo provides ways the Interagency Council can take action on the Advisory Committee recommendations within its purview, using the tools at its disposal.

At the March 27th Council Meeting, Council Members will vote to approve the proposed action steps and direct the various bodies within Cal ICH to focus on implementing the recommendations.

BACKGROUND

In late 2022, Cal ICH members expressed interest in hearing from the Advisory Committee on how to best coordinate State funding and programs. At the September 2023 Council meeting, the Committee provided an initial set of recommendations to the Interagency Council in a memo titled [Recommendations from Members of the Advisory Committee on Strengthening Implementation of State Homelessness Funding and Programs](#).

Interagency Council Members asked various questions about these recommendations. To answer these questions, Council staff reached out to members of the Committee who work at the community level and are familiar with state funding. Members of the Racial Equity Working Group were also consulted on some questions pertaining to their work and provided some comments. The responses provide deeper insight into the

recommendations provided by the Advisory Committee. A summary of those responses is provided as Appendix A of this memo.

Additionally, using this information, Cal ICH staff created a list of potential ways the Interagency Council can use its resources to move the Committee's recommendations forward that are within its purview.

ACTION STEPS TO MOVE RECOMMENDATIONS FORWARD

Given the responses to the questions posed by Interagency Council members and examples of implementation opportunities provided by the Advisory Committee, the Interagency Council is equipped to identify ways to move the original recommendations forward through the tools it has at its disposal.

Cal ICH staff created the table below as a crosswalk between the original Advisory Committee recommendations and the proposed action steps the Interagency Council could take to implement them. Staff attempted to propose action steps for each recommendation. Some of the proposed action steps cover multiple recommendations, so are reproduced in each section they are applicable. Staff also noted certain recommendations that fall outside the Interagency Council's purview.

In addition to these steps, the Interagency Council could request to discuss any of these proposed recommendations or action steps further at a future meeting. Further, each of these action steps could be included in the next Cal ICH Action Plan as a way to ensure they are implemented and track their progress.

#	Advisory Committee Recommendations	Proposed Action Step(s)
1	The Interagency Council should pursue actions to reduce administrative burden for applicants, including:	
1.1	The creation of a unified homeless funding application, especially in cases where eligible applicants and uses are duplicative, and potential consolidation of overlapping programs into one more comprehensive program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct the State Funding and Programs Working Group to create recommendations on standard funding application questions, reporting requirements, outcomes, and definitions to help unify state funding applications as much as possible. • Direct the State Funding and Programs Working Group to create recommendations on the ways state programs can design funding requirements to reduce administrative barriers to communities (e.g. funding
1.2	Consolidating audits across multiple programs.	
1.3	Aligning timelines/reporting with similar federal funding sources.	

1.4	Creating multi-year funding applications, as the federal government is considering for the CoC program.	<p>application and allocation timelines, multiple reports, capacity building, addressing conflicting policies, aligning definitions and requirements) based on Working Group and Advisory Committee recommendations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Cal ICH staff create a central location for all state homelessness program information including funding information and timelines, tasking Council departments and agencies to provide updated information to that source.
2	The Interagency Council should explore opportunities to strengthen capacity among funded entities and their service providers with an eye towards advancing equity, including:	
2.1	Expediting payments and reimbursements to awardees and their funded service to reduce the "float" time and costs of programs due to factors like A) lengthy gaps between award and execution of contracts or B) the cost-reimbursement basis of funding. The Interagency Council should lower the barriers to obtaining cash advances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct the State Funding and Programs Working Group to create recommendations on the ways state programs can design funding requirements to reduce administrative barriers to communities (e.g. funding application and allocation timelines, multiple reports, capacity building, addressing conflicting policies, aligning definitions and requirements) based on Working Group and Advisory Committee recommendations. <i>(Repeated from above)</i>
2.2	The Interagency Council should work with grantees to lower barriers to smaller, culturally-sensitive providers accessing funding. This should include incentivizing grantees to remove procurement and contracting requirements that screen out organizations that are well-equipped to serve marginalized populations but may not meet all traditional procurement requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct the State Funding and Programs Working Group in partnership with Racial Equity Working Group to review common contract requirements that create barriers for small, rural, and Tribal communities. Create recommendations to alleviate those barriers. • Direct Cal ICH staff and the Racial Equity Working Group to identify Technical Assistance opportunities focused on specific populations (e.g. smaller communities, Tribal entities, BIPOC communities) and make that information publicly available in a central location. • Direct Cal ICH staff to create a best practices document for working with Tribal entities, including grantmaking and data collection.

2.3	Fostering greater roles for people with lived experience of homelessness in decision-making among grantees, including allowing/incentivizing stipends for people with lived experience and greater support for peer support programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct the Lived Experience Advisory Board to create best practices for including people with lived experience of homelessness within homelessness services programs. • Direct the State Funding and Programs Working Group to identify opportunities within existing funding to compensate people with lived experience of homelessness in a peer support or advisory capacity.
2.4	Center marginalized communities: provide Technical Assistance for rural communities, invite tribal entities to the planning process, and ensure program data is disaggregated by race.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Cal ICH staff and the Racial Equity Working Group to identify Technical Assistance opportunities focused on specific populations (e.g. smaller communities, Tribal entities, BIPOC communities) and make that information publicly available in a central location. <i>(Repeated from above)</i>
2.5	Support the unique needs of different communities with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding that supports uses like fostering community buy-in, • Peer support programs and other workforce development programs, • Planning efforts to reduce permitting times, • And other flexible, innovative uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct the State Funding and Programs Working Group in partnership with Racial Equity Working Group to review common contract requirements that create barriers for small, rural, and Tribal communities. Create recommendations to alleviate those barriers. <i>(Repeated from above)</i> • Direct the Racial Equity Working Group to identify opportunities for smaller organizations to receive guidance or mentorship from more established entities in funding applications, including identifying the right balance of Technical Assistance opportunities for various local jurisdictions (e.g. large urban areas versus smaller or rural communities and new providers)
2.6	Research the intensity of services needed to serve high acuity populations served in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and costs of delivering of those services, including property management and living wages for staff over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Cal ICH staff to summarize existing research on service needs and costs for individuals with complex health conditions and best practices to support housing stability and improve health outcomes.
3	The Interagency Council should advocate to the Administration and Legislature to prioritize changes to how state funding is structured, including:	

3.1	Consider baseline funding, coupled with increased funding beyond baseline for uses such as capital and innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct the State Funding and Programs Working Group to create recommendations on the ways state programs can design funding requirements to reduce administrative barriers to communities (e.g. funding application and allocation timelines, multiple reports, capacity building, addressing conflicting policies, aligning definitions and requirements) based on Working Group and Advisory Committee recommendations. <i>(Repeated from above)</i>
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Recommendations Outside the Council Purview

The Advisory Committee also provided the following recommendations on funding length and design, which are outside the purview of the Interagency Council and therefore will not be voted on:

- Directing generalized administrative funding to entities that administer homeless services, akin to CalFresh Administration or Medi-Cal Administration allocations to counties.
- Providing guidance on minimum administrative support for providers that contract with state grantees, including direction to ensure admin dollars reach culturally sensitive providers serving marginalized communities to allow these entities to invest in needed back-office functions. These items are decided through the Administration, Legislature, and/or Federal regulations depending on the program, however, they are important to note as they are challenges in implementing state funding.
- Providing ongoing funding or multi-year funding for programs, including multiyear application cycles, which would reduce administrative burden and allow for longer-range planning and investments in uses such as Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) that successfully end people's homelessness.

NEXT STEPS

Cal ICH staff will present these proposed action steps to the Interagency Council at their meeting on February 28, 2024. The Interagency Council may discuss the actions, propose changes, and/or vote to move them forward. Following this decision, Cal ICH staff will coordinate with state staff and other groups mentioned above to implement the decisions of the Interagency Council. Any updates and follow-ups will be provided to the Interagency Council and Advisory Committee as necessary.

APPENDIX A: Advisory Committee Member Responses to Council Member Questions

The below comments are from Advisory Committee members in response to Council member questions. Advisory Committee members were asked to respond in December 2023.¹

Reducing Administrative Burden in State Funding

1. What are the organizations and communities that interact with various state agencies and departments?

- Each county is set up differently in how local departments organize to provide services for those experiencing homelessness. In communities where the Continuum of Care (CoC) is not a legal entity, **cities and/or counties** will act as the administrator of CoC funds and be engaged with several state departments.
- From a County where **the CoC** leads coordination, they work with BCSH (Cal ICH and HCD), CalHHS, CDSS, DHCS, DSH, CalOES, CDE, Caltrans and CalVet.
- From a county provider perspective, **the county** works with at least HCD, Cal ICH, CDSS, and DHCS, notably working with different divisions within the same agencies. The challenges of working with multiple entities are the different definitions of eligibility, allowable uses, reporting structures, timelines, methods of reimbursement and funding, and siloed technical assistance. It is difficult to create seamless access to services with the conflicting policies, and even more so for organizations that are subcontracted.
- **Non-profit organizations** such as community-based homelessness service providers and affordable housing developers also interact directly with several departments.
- In the case of community-based veterans' organizations, there is **significant interaction with federal agencies** and occasionally there are conflicts between state and federal requirements.

2. Can you provide specifics for which audits and reports need to be consolidated?

- **Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) grant allocations** could be consolidated into a single annual report. Currently, a staff member in one community prepares six different annual reports for HHAP: two each for the CoC and County for Rounds 1 and 2, then for Round 3, and Round 4. HHAP Round 5 will soon increase this to seven reports. In another community, staff prepare five HHAP reports that are due at the same time. It is difficult for smaller communities to navigate, such as San Benito County who receive less than \$1 million in HHAP Funds.
- A service provider contracted with **Emergency Solutions Grant funding** reports to the agency they are contracted with (the local funder), their direct funder (state

¹ In November 2023, Cal ICH staff reached out to members of the Committee who work at the community level and are familiar with state funding. Cal ICH received responses in early December and summarized them for the Advisory Committee meeting in January 2024.

departments) and indirect funders through the state. Each group audits independently for similar, if not the same, information. Local agencies administering the funds could conduct the monitoring and report to the other funders.

- Departments should **track the same outcomes and align them with the definitions of federal agencies**. A simplified report would draw more diverse agencies to participate. Smaller agencies may not apply because they lack capacity to handle the various funding streams and reporting requirements.

Strengthening Capacity of Funded Entities with an Eye Towards Equity

1. How can the Council support the groups and organizations that are not familiar with all the funding streams? Is there a way to be more proactive to bring funding to those organizations and understand their needs? How can the Council be more targeted in their approach to funding?

- The “**Putting the Funding Pieces Together**” document issued by Cal ICH was helpful and comprehensive, but difficult to navigate as a paper document. A single **website portal that directs community-based organizations and counties to all state funding related to homelessness** would be more useful, especially if the resource could be organized by target populations (youth, veterans, etc.).
- Providing **presentations on funding to rural communities and making funding feel realistic**. Although there is a smaller number of people experiencing homelessness, their length of time in homelessness is far too long due to the lack of resources. A **set aside to rural and Tribal communities** would also generate more interest and utilization of funding sources. The funding should be enough for a substantial change.
- **An outreach campaign to organizations serving youth and elders** in each county. These are growing populations of homelessness, but organizations are intimidated to apply for state funding.
- Recommending communities and CoCs to have **more representatives from the higher education system in their network**. Their participation would allow for greater outreach to students on the services and benefits available in the community and for better coordination on homelessness initiatives, such as a safe parking area. Additionally, colleges should promote courses with personal and professional benefits, such as auto repair classes that allow students living in vehicles to maintain them. Colleges should also utilize their departments to innovate alternative housing and sustainable building solutions.
- Providing simple RFPs and targeted outreach, such as **offering TA to communities and organizations new to state funding before RFPs are released**. There are often requirements in RFPs that can't be met during the timeline and this information would put them on par with communities already receiving funding and who are familiar with when items are due. It should also be noted that organizations “unfamiliar” with funding sources may actually be unable to meet the

requirements and regulations and would benefit from a program expansion that meets the needs of the community served.

- Providing **meaningful, timely, and direct outreach including individualized technical assistance (TA) and support** where groups and organizations are assigned to TA providers that best meet their needs. Individual communication will be better received as mass emails will not reach organizations not subscribed or who receive it as spam.
- Providing **meaningful, timely, and direct consultation. Trusted groups, coalitions, and entities should be utilized as host agencies for listening sessions** when discussing needs and for information to target organizations not familiar with funding. State departments should also offer individual sessions with organizations who would like closed sessions. Both **qualitative and quantitative data** should be accepted to better explain and understand community needs. By learning the needs of these communities, the Council can better understand the need to **broaden funding programs and their requirements, definitions, and deliverables**. Similarly, understanding why a funding source doesn't work will allow the Council to amend, expand, broaden, and develop funding opportunities.

2. What are the barriers that smaller communities face?

- **Unrealistic timelines and contracts that don't come in a timely manner after announcement of funding.** If it takes six months to get a contract when reapplying for a rapid-rehousing program, for example, an agency in a small community with limited resources will close the program before the new funds come in. The quick process to distribute the first HEAP awards should be used by every state agency.
- The **allowed admin percentages are too low** to sustain the work for financial and operational reporting required by state agencies. Additionally small and rural communities have relatively **low infrastructure and capacity, specifically a lack of skilled staff**, to navigate complex funding resources and are challenged by a lack of willingness to do this work from community-based partners.
- Smaller communities often **don't have the infrastructure to support one another** as many providers are faith-based and not familiar with government funding. Additionally, **less established providers may have challenges supporting clients** compared to those who frequently receive funding. A visual resource to keep track of the different funding cycles would be helpful.
- In small, rural areas, **individuals experiencing homelessness can be dispersed in the community and homeless households tend to be unstably housed** and not street homeless. Coordinated entry systems can over-emphasize street-level needs and overlook work related to homelessness prevention.
- **People experiencing homelessness are often left out of the consultant-level work when planning community efforts or participate on Lived Experience boards on a volunteer basis.** When compensation is available for people with lived experience in advising roles, it can take months to be received or come in the

form of gift cards. The state can incentivize communities to work with those with lived experience with a 5-10% set-aside to compensate individuals.

- The **CoC may also not be representative of all the community**. CoCs should be provided with guidelines recommending the inclusion of specific groups in their network. Law enforcement is crucial to have as a partner as they are the face of community efforts and should be using policing models that minimize criminalization. Communities may also **need support for outreach to those who are non-native speakers**, such as those from Hispanic and Asian communities, as people from these communities may be hesitant to seek services.

3. What does it mean to uplift equity? How can the Council support organizational equity? How can the Council support workforce equity?

- Uplifting equity is to **consider everyone as a human being first** in an unbiased, non-judgmental, dignified manner. It also **provides inclusive, non-discriminatory experiences, including for California Tribes**.
- There are 110 federally recognized tribes in California, some with homelessness rates of up to 70%, were recently granted state funding and are less resourced than other communities. **Programs and policies need to be developed and improved in partnership with Tribes and with formal Tribal consultation** as they require supports and resources that work for their needs. The Council can support a Tribal advisory board with regional representation and expertise in tribal solutions to advise the Council. Workforce equity can be supported using the best practices from [Creating an Inclusive Workforce for Native Americans \(U.S. Department of Labor\)](#) and by supporting funding for California Tribal-led workforce development organizations and initiatives.
- Equity should be **centered in meaningful ways: considered in all steps of the process from program outreach, regular consultation, defining measures and addressing outcomes**. The Council can have discussion on root causes of inequities; convene representatives of welfare, health, and criminal justice systems; and have a dialogue on policy changes. Equity should be framed as intersectional, customizable, and not “one-size fits all.”
- Uplifting equity for formerly incarcerated individuals, especially black men, is to actively work towards a more inclusive and fair society that **recognizes the unique challenges posed by the intersection of racial identity and a history of incarceration**. It involves **a holistic approach that includes policy changes, social support, economic opportunities, and a commitment to challenging racial and systemic injustices**. This includes advocating for policies to remove systemic barriers, such as removing criminal history questions from applications, and providing economic opportunities through access to job training, education opportunities tailored to needs, supporting entrepreneurship and fellowships, and educating employment centers to invest in hiring.
- The Council can **support organizational equity for minority-led organizations and those serving BIPOC communities** with **inclusive funding strategies**, such as set-asides, offering training, mentorship, and support programs for grant writing,

management, and strategic planning, partnering them with larger organizations, and public awareness campaigns. State departments can facilitate a cross-departmental NOFA workshop showcasing equity-related funding streams and coordinate TA providers for consistent messaging, goals, and strategies, and seek state funding to pilot investments in strategies. Council staff can focus on developing guidance on implementing Housing First strategies in equity-conscious ways and how organizations can address common issues.

- The Council can enable, encourage, and incentivize credible local entities and organizations of various sizes to **advise, support capacity building, and partner to improve access and utilization of services and programs by underserved communities** to realize significant improvements to health and well-being. The Council can also encourage and facilitate **long-term funding opportunities for local entities who** are working together to address the most pressing health issues in our respective communities and who are **implementing innovative workforces addressing high-priority needs**, such as homelessness, black maternal and infant birth outcomes, diabetes, and asthma remediation. Collectively impacting an individual's ecosystem of care and improving health outcomes requires multi-agency and disciplinary partnerships, including with grass-roots organizations.
- State departments can support **developing workforce strategy recommendations** at all levels (communities, providers, and contractors), including guidance/funding for creatively addressing wages and embedding equity into contracting processes. Additionally, State departments can encourage incentives for entities innovatively and effectively incorporating equity, promoting education opportunities for staff, measuring their current workforce equity, and understanding the equity of where their funding goes. As a Council, there is possibility of partnering with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and other state opportunities that support workforce equity.
- **Supporting workforce organization requires creating a workplace culture that welcomes diversity and actively supports and nurtures it**, including encouraging the recruitment of BIPOC candidates. This could be through working with organizations and schools and ensuring job postings reach diverse communities; conducting regular trainings for staff on unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusivity; offering mentorship and career development opportunities; ensuring that compensation and benefits are fair and competitive; and advocating for workforce equity policies at local, state, and national levels. Communities should be encouraged to keep leaders accountable to diversity and inclusion goals, continuously assess the effectiveness of their practices, and enable a system where employees can provide feedback.
- **HDIS and data collection should inform fair and just allocation of resources**, ensuring that those who are disproportionately impacted are receiving resources that meet their needs. State departments should **explicitly state when data does not include California Tribes**. When equity data from HMIS is referenced, it should be noted that it is not truly equitable as 109 Federally Recognized tribes are not included. Tribal led data solutions should be supported. Council staff can lead

data analytics identifying disproportionately impacted communities and their service needs, service delivery, and changes over time.

4. How can resources from the homelessness response system support K-12 children experiencing homelessness?

- **There are K-12 students experiencing homelessness that don't qualify for services offered by the homelessness response system.** State departments can consider a **more expansive definition** to support and bridge funding gaps, increase access points for the Coordinated Entry System (CES), and continue to partner with trusted community nonprofits that serve youth and families. Communities can **leverage medical and other funding streams** that benefit the specific needs of these students.
- Children experiencing homelessness are usually invisible as they are rarely seen in unsheltered homelessness, and families sometimes hide their housing instability. Responses from Coordinated Entry are not always appropriate because they do not always prioritize the urgent and unique needs of households with children. Communities should be invited to **set up a second or alternative CES that better address households with children.** Additionally, **programs like Bringing Families Home should be elevated and expanded** as it allows an expansive definition of homelessness tailored to the reality of children experiencing homelessness. Truly addressing deep prevention of homelessness includes a focus on eliminating childhood homelessness.

Advise External Partners on Funding Structure Changes:

1. How can we incorporate existing models for sustainability into this work? (Example: Incubation academy, marketplace, CalAIM technical assistance)

- **Expand CalAIM technical assistance (TA)** to streamline across communities. TA providers like Home Base provide a lot of TA on federal funding, and similar TA should be available for the array of State funding.
- Review the rate of state grants and contracts needed to adequately fund the work, including **allowing internal staff responding to audits/reports be a direct funded line item** as it is a funding requirement. Current funding administrative allowances are between 0-10% and are not sustainable. Additionally, allowing for an **annual rate escalator that adjusts for costs of living and inflation.**
- **Providing multi-year contracts and advances on contracts** so that service providers are not fronting the money for this work.