

Imperial County



Homelessness Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

This plan outlines a several-year strategy to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in the Imperial County Continuum of Care (CoC). The direction and goals included in this plan build upon the significant progress the county and Imperial Valley Continuum of Care Council (IVCCC) have made toward ending homelessness while also recognizing new practices, emerging challenges, and opportunities to develop a system that uses all available resources to permanently house people experiencing a housing crisis.

In response to the growing number of people experiencing homelessness in the county, and their complex service needs, the communities within Imperial County have come together to form the IVCCC and have mobilized around the issue of homelessness.¹ The CoC is a collective of a variety of organizations including educational, legal, business, and faith-based interests; homeless service providers; city, county, and state agencies; and private businesses as well as private individuals and consumer advocates. This strong collaboration represents one of the greatest tools within the IVCCC to combat homelessness. Through this CoC structure, member organizations were able to successfully seek \$186,875 in federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2019. The FY19 CoC Program funding was awarded for renewal project funding (coordinated entry program and rapid re-housing) and for additional CoC Program funds, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This funding will be used to create housing and service programs for people experiencing homelessness within Imperial County.

While much has been accomplished in Imperial County, the experience of homelessness continues to affect many individuals and families, while others live one paycheck or unforeseeable circumstance away from falling into homelessness, i.e., at risk of homelessness. These realities propel county officials, nonprofit housing and service providers,

faith-based organizations, and many other stakeholders to continually strive to find new solutions to address and prevent homelessness.

This plan proposes a series of steps to strategically utilize existing resources and position the IVCCC to access new resources. It intentionally builds upon the strengths of the community, namely the CoC and the capacity of its individual members, to leverage existing resources to address challenges such as the shortages of affordable housing and permanent supportive housing. Specific strategies are organized under three primary, overarching goals:

Strategic Plan Goals

- 1 Prevent and Divert New Households From Becoming Homeless**
- 2 Design and Operate a Functioning Coordinated Entry System**
- 3 End Homelessness in Imperial County: Move People who are Experiencing Homelessness into Permanent Housing as Quickly as Possible**

The Imperial County Department of Social Services is the lead administrative entity for the IVCCC and it is recommended that the county continue this arrangement for the implementation of this plan. This role includes providing a vision and strategy to implement and update the plan as needed, identifying and seeking out resources, and providing the leadership to make mid-course adjustments. The plan identifies some measurable outcomes to ensure constant and consistent attention to the action strategies and to help measure success. Success will be dependent on the willingness and commitment of key stakeholders to embrace innovation and a culture of change.

1. A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.



Background

In January 2019, California’s Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) presented the opportunity for CoCs and counties across the state to request technical assistance in three different areas of focus: capacity building, Housing First, and housing stability. Eligible recipients of the technical assistance included those CoCs and counties that were direct recipients or administrators of California’s Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program or No Place Like Home funding. In July of 2019, the Department of Social Services at Imperial County, as a member of the Imperial Valley Continuum of Care Council (IVCCC) submitted a request for support in developing a county-wide plan to end homelessness.

Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) was retained by HCD to engage with all CoCs and counties that submitted requests for capacity-building technical assistance. TAC worked with HCD and the Imperial County staff to develop a work plan, and the engagement began in September of 2019. The goal of the process was to help Imperial County establish intentional and meaningful strategies to prevent and end homelessness throughout the county, culminating in a written strategic plan.

While Imperial County is unique in its capacity and needs, there is a commitment for county efforts to address homelessness within the structure of the IVCCC. Therefore, the planning process which produced this document focused on a more system-level approach to preventing and ending homelessness within the county. TAC conducted a thorough document review. In addition to remote planning sessions and communication with county staff and IVCCC leadership, TAC facilitated an on-site strategic planning meeting in December 2019. The IVCCC hosted two community forums on February 18, 2020 to obtain public input and to promote transparency and buy-in within the other geographic areas throughout the county. The two community forums were held in the City of Calexico, and the City of Brawley. Throughout the process, the voice of persons with lived experience was prioritized including a focus group consisting of persons currently living on the streets or in places not meant for human habitation in Imperial County.

This collaborative effort produced the goals, strategies, and action steps outlined in this plan to prevent and end homelessness in Imperial County.

Overview of Homelessness in Imperial County

The state of California is in the midst of an unprecedented homelessness and housing crisis. The number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness far exceeds that of any other state in the country. As of the January 2019 point-in-time (PIT) count, the number of persons experiencing homelessness in California was 151,278.¹ Nearly half of all people experiencing homelessness in the country were in three states: California (27% or 151,278 people); New York (16% or 92,091 people); and Florida (5% or 28,328 people).² While the highest counts of homelessness exist in some of California's larger metropolitan areas, Imperial County is not untouched by the crisis.

The 2019 annual PIT count, which encompasses all of Imperial County, reports that there are 1,225 unsheltered households living on the streets, in cars, or in places not meant for human habitation and 188 sheltered households, which includes those in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs for people who are experiencing homelessness. The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Imperial County has increased by 47 percent since 2017. This large increase can be attributed, in part, to better counting practices. In 2019, roughly 190 volunteers completed a PIT count training, of whom 124 counted people in inner cities within Imperial County, and 82 counted and engaged with people in Slab City, on the morning of the PIT. It is worth noting that the CoC has not counted any unaccompanied youth during the homeless PIT counts.

Cost of Homelessness in Imperial County

A chronically homeless person costs taxpayers an average of \$35,578 per year. Costs on average are reduced by 49.5% when a homeless person is placed in supportive housing. Supportive housing costs on average \$12,800, making the net savings roughly \$4,800 per year.³

Key findings from a study in Santa Clara, California: "Overall, clients connected to permanent housing showed greater reduction in both [emergency department (ED)] use and charges compared to those who remained homeless or in less stable housing arrangements (a 34% reduction compared to a 12% reduction in ED visits, a 31% reduction compared to a 2% reduction in ED charges)." "The group connected to housing showed significantly greater reductions in the in-patient charges (a 27% decrease for those connected vs. a 49% increase for those not connected)."⁴

There is a cost to Imperial County as people continue to experience homelessness. The county is working to document the costs of the following services:

- Deployment of EMS services
- Jail costs, estimated at \$83.82 per day/per individual, averaging an annual cost of \$2.5 million not including facilities operating costs
- Hospitals "write off" \$13.4 million per year as the cost of people using emergency room and medical/hospital services
- Fire response in encampments

1. [The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf), <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

2. [The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf), <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

3. [Ending Chronic Homelessness Saves Taxpayers Money](http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Cost-Savings-from-PSH.pdf), <http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Cost-Savings-from-PSH.pdf>.

4. [Permanent Supportive Housing Cost Savings \(Google Maps\)](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1EWg342EF7C8ahFkcjELoca7xVIQ&ll=35.73607162795948%2C-64.76090535647609&z=4), <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1EWg342EF7C8ahFkcjELoca7xVIQ&ll=35.73607162795948%2C-64.76090535647609&z=4>.

- Public works department spends roughly \$100,000 per year, which includes code enforcement and trash clean up. Often these costs are higher than dedicating resources to provide people with permanent housing.

Slab City: Unique Challenge within Imperial County

At the start of WWII, the U.S. Marine Corps decided there was a need for a training center for field and anti-aircraft artillery units of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific and it needed to be near an aircraft carrier near San Diego. The deserts close to San Diego were deemed “ideal” therefore, Anza Borrego, Ocotillo, and Niland were considered. Niland was selected and construction of Camp Dunlap began and was then commissioned on Oct. 15, 1942. In 1956, the base was dismantled and then determined to be no longer required by the Department of Defense. In October of 1961, the former base was given to the State of California by “quitclaim deed.” The former Camp Dunlap buildings were removed, and all that remained were the concrete slabs used for the building foundations.

After the base was abandoned, people began camping at the slabs. This soon become a trend over the years, with increased campers arriving and many never leaving Slab City. There was no infrastructure within Slab City, e.g. no running water, sewage, electricity or garbage collection.

Over the years, the Imperial County CoC felt that some residents of Slab City fell within the HUD definition of homelessness⁵ and decided to implement a more thorough homeless count starting in 2017.

As a result of this new methodology, the number of persons counted in Slab City have represented more than half of all unsheltered persons counted during the annual PIT. It is important to note that while many of these people fit HUD’s definition of unsheltered homeless people, many “residents” of Slab City do not consider themselves as homeless.

Existing Resources and Identified Gaps

[Appendix A](#) includes a list of state and federal resources and programs that can be used to create new affordable housing units/projects, operate and subsidized affordable housing units, and pay for a myriad of supportive services for people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.

In addition to the state and federal resources listed in [Appendix A](#), Imperial County has local resources. Currently there are 60 local service providers that make up the IVCCC. The services offered through these agencies include emergency shelters, subsidized housing, community meals, food delivery to encampments, food pantries, free markets and produce, rental assistance, rehabilitation beds, job training, and hygiene resources and programs.

5. [HUD Homeless Definition](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf). <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf>.

Identified Themes to Address Gaps and Challenges

Imperial County faces significant challenges in its work to prevent and end homelessness. These difficulties and resource gaps have been identified in an effort to inform the goals and strategies included in this plan. They have been outlined below in four categories or themes. In the implementation section of this plan, each of these four themes will be used to address the goals and strategies within this plan.

Themes	Current Resource Gaps & Challenges
<p>Crisis Response System</p>	
<p>Relating to the county’s crisis response system and capacity for assisting households at risk of and currently experiencing homelessness. It is imperative that people understand the risk of homelessness, and the relative fragility of many households’ housing situations.</p> <p>Households at risk of homelessness are often one paycheck, utility bill, or medical bill away from an episode of homelessness. Those with untreated behavioral health needs may be forced to leave housing due to related behaviors and risks. For those households that do enter the homeless crisis response system, the availability and access to safe shelter and outreach services are essential.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more day shelters, cooling centers • No shelters are located in the northern part of the county • Need shelter beds for people with higher medical needs and/or physical disabilities • Need shelter for men • Need LGBTQ-targeted services • Need resources for homeless youth ages 18–24 • Need navigation and housing services in current shelters • Need showers and places for people to store belongings while in shelter • Very limited wraparound or stabilization services in permanent supportive housing • Need more behavioral health services — access while people are in crisis • Need for access to services after normal business hours
<p>Housing Resources</p>	
<p>Relating to the availability of both public and private housing resources. The county is experiencing a severe lack of affordable housing for households at risk of and experiencing homelessness, particularly extremely and very low-income households. Long-term success in addressing homelessness in the county will involve both increasing the affordable housing stock and obtaining rental subsidies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of affordable housing • No local provider funded to provide permanent supportive housing • Huge deficit of landlords • Existing housing stock is limited and unaffordable to people with extremely low incomes

Themes	Current Resource Gaps & Challenges
<p>■ Supportive Services</p>	
<p>Relating to the availability and access to services and other supports that aid households in their ability to maintain housing successfully. Supportive services are often the key to ensuring that households at risk of homelessness are able to maintain their housing and avoid entry into the crisis response system. Similarly, supportive services also serve as the primary mechanism for ensuring that formerly homeless households are able to successfully maintain housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more robust employment services • Lack of transition-age youth resources • Lack of services in north county
<p>■ System-Level Coordination</p>	
<p>Relating to challenges experienced at the systems or community level that likely extend beyond the homeless services system. These challenges may involve systems of care other than the homeless crisis response system, and are likely bigger than any one project or resource.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for increased participation in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) • Need to implement a coordinated entry system • Meal services need to be coordinated to reduce waste of resources • Lack of public transportation throughout the county

Overview of Goals and Strategies

Homelessness ends with a crisis response system that is able to provide housing in order to ensure that as someone experiences a cause of homelessness that it is rare, brief, and non-recurring. This plan identifies the three following goals:

1. Prevent and Divert New Households From Becoming Homeless
2. Design and Operate a Functioning Coordinated Entry System
3. End Homelessness in Imperial County; Move People who are Experiencing Homelessness into Permanent Housing as Quickly as Possible

In order to meet each of the goals that the community and stakeholders in Imperial County developed, specific strategies are proposed:

Goal 1: Prevent and Divert New Households from Becoming Homeless

Strategy 1A: Develop a community-wide initiative to prevent homelessness.

Strategy 1B: Collect and analyze information on households at risk of homelessness and those experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Strategy 1C: Increase education on access to mainstream resources for households at risk of homelessness.

Strategy 1D: Create and make available community-wide trainings on workforce training programs, educational training programs, family support programs, and supportive behavioral health services.

Goal 2: Design and Operate a Functioning Coordinated Entry System

Strategy 2A: Create a coordinated entry system that uses an objective prioritization tool; leverages current provider agencies and shelters as access points; has full Imperial County geographic coverage; and includes the full homeless response system (outreach services, emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and diversion).

Strategy 2B: Identify and utilize a diversion screening tool to assess households for alternatives to entering shelter and, as appropriate, suggest one-time assistance to prevent an episode of homelessness.

Strategy 2C: Identify access points and assessment process.

Strategy 2D: Create a prioritization policy that prioritizes households in need of housing and services based on vulnerability, housing barriers, and need.

Strategy 2E: Create an operational process to match eligible households with limited homeless resources throughout Imperial County.

Strategy 2F: Design a feedback loop and an evaluation process for the coordinated entry system.

Goal 3: End Homelessness in Imperial County; Move People who are Experiencing Homelessness into Permanent Housing as Quickly as Possible

Strategy 3A: Pursue strategies such as reallocation and permanent supportive housing bonus funds to expand permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing through CoC program funds.

Strategy 3B: Continue to apply for California Emergency Solutions and Housing (CESH), Housing for a Healthy California, Homeless Emergency

Aid Program (HEAP), No Place Like Home (NPLH) and Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) state funds.

Strategy 3C: Increase the number of units in private housing available to persons transitioning from homelessness.

Strategy 3D: Create a property owner/landlord engagement initiative.

Strategy 3E: Maximize Housing First opportunity. Housing First is a proven approach that should be implemented system-wide as well as at the project level.

Strategy 3F: Use data to lead planning and programming priorities.

Strategy 3G: Ensure that resources and services are available to formerly homeless households in order to maintain their tenancies.

Action Plan to Address Homelessness in Imperial County

Goal 1: Prevent and Divert New Households from Becoming Homeless

Strategy 1A: Develop a community-wide initiative to prevent homelessness.

■ **Theme:** System Level Coordination

Action Steps:

- ▶ Facilitate a meeting of all agencies and providers regarding potential “prevention resources” including Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), ESG-funded initiatives, faith-based programs, and fuel assistance programs. Determine any gaps in prevention resources, identify ways to use resources more efficiently, and streamline referrals and access to resources.
- ▶ Set an ambitious goal for a reduction, within the next two years, of the number of new households entering the homeless system.
- ▶ Distribute information on the risk of homelessness, key indicators of possible risk, and available resources to schools, faith-based organizations, and city and state agencies frequented by the public. Work with the County Mental Health Department to incorporate “risk of homelessness” in their programs.
- ▶ Work with the Imperial County School Department’s homelessness liaison to train all employees on risk factors for becoming homeless. Establish single points of contact at area schools to identify students at risk of becoming homeless.

Goal 1: Prevent and Divert New Households from Becoming Homeless

Strategy 1B: Collect and analyze information on households at risk of homelessness and those experiencing homelessness for the first time.

■ **Theme:** Crisis Response System

Action Steps:

- ▶ Expand data collection through HMIS as well as other county agencies and information sources to report on high utilizers of crisis systems and households that may be at greater risk of homelessness.
- ▶ Establish data-sharing protocol between providers to understand who is accessing resources within the CoC.
- ▶ Assess reliability of first-time homeless data and review data protocols to determine their reliability. Consider additional ways to assess whether a household is “first-time homeless” or was homeless in another CoC prior to entering into the IVCCC.
- ▶ Train providers on the correct way to gather and report on this metric.
- ▶ Establish policies and practices for the collection and analysis of Street Outreach data. Assess data for possible insights into the recent increase in unsheltered homelessness in the IVCCC and develop a resource list geared to first responders based on data received.

Strategy 1C: Increase education on access to mainstream resources for households at risk of homelessness.

■ **Theme:** Supportive Services Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Encourage all provider agency and county staff working with households experiencing homelessness/at risk of homelessness to participate in the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Online Course in order to increase SOAR access in Imperial County.
- ▶ Establish a formal linkage between county health and human services departments and behavioral health systems. Establishment of formal relationships will increase likelihood of access for households in need and potential for data-sharing.
- ▶ Identify and establish clear access and pathway to services for youth aging out of foster care and those who identify as LGBTQ.
- ▶ Establish practices for better assessment of employment needs. Include employment-related questions on the diversion and coordinated entry assessment tools (VI-SPDAT) so referrals to employment-related services can be accessed immediately.
- ▶ Establish strong partnerships between systems to allow for data cross-checking. Certain sub-populations captured in HMIS may also be eligible for Medi-Cal and other health care resources and ways to increase household income.

Goal 2: Design and Operate a Functioning Coordinated Entry System

Strategy 1D: Create and make available community-wide trainings on workforce training programs, educational training programs, family support programs and supportive behavior health services.

■ **Theme:** Supportive Services Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Work with county agencies that provide services for people at risk of unemployment with the social services, workforce board, Imperial Valley College, Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program.
- ▶ Work with private employers within Imperial County to provide education of “working poor” population and create relationships through outreach to prevent layoffs within private organizations and businesses.
- ▶ Work with local city/town business communities to help build stronger relations and train and employ people who are homeless and/or at risk of homelessness.
- ▶ Work with community providers, county agencies, and local stakeholders to develop and deliver trainings to help families with day-to-day tasks: budgeting, landlord/tenant relationship-building, connections to local trade schools, etc.
- ▶ Work with local agencies and professionals within the fields of mental health, substance use, and domestic violence to strengthen the support services to address common underlying causes of households becoming homeless.
- ▶ Understand and work with youth who may be aging out of foster care.

Goal 2: Design and Operate a Functioning Coordinated Entry System

Strategy 2A: Create a coordinated entry system that uses an objective prioritization tool; leverages current provider agencies and shelters as access points; has full Imperial County geographic coverage; and includes the full homeless response system (outreach services, emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and diversion).

■ **Theme:** System Level Coordination

Action Steps:

- ▶ Define a lead Coordinated Entry (CE) agency to manage and oversee the coordinated entry system; many communities use the Collaborative Applicant and/or county as the CE Lead.
- ▶ Clearly define the roles between the CE Lead and other agencies operating CE in terms of CE program participation and accountability.
- ▶ Develop standardized tools to educate staff at provider agencies on coordinated entry 101; use this training as new staff enter provider agencies to ensure there is consistent and constant understanding of CE basic principles and operations.
- ▶ Define decision-making processes within and between committees and the CoC leadership board, to ensure the CE design and improvement process can be nimble and responsive to consumer and provider needs.

Goal 2: Design and Operate a Functioning Coordinated Entry System

- ▶ Create and execute a consumer engagement strategy so that the voice of those with lived experience of both homelessness and using CE are infused into design and decision-making.
- ▶ Continue to educate stakeholders, with an emphasis on leadership bodies, on the value, function, and intended goals of CE so they are equipped to monitor its performance and support its development.
- ▶ Develop detailed procedures and workflows to increase trust and fidelity in CE processes among participating stakeholders.

Strategy 2B: Identify and utilize a diversion screening tool to assess households for alternatives to entering shelter and, as appropriate, suggest one-time assistance to prevent an episode of homelessness.

■ **Theme:** Crisis Response System

Action Steps:

- ▶ Design diversion and progressive assistance strategies to reduce demand for the most intensive resources within the CoC (i.e. permanent supportive housing) to create effective inflow management.
- ▶ Include progressive engagement strategies, including diversion, before more intensive interventions — less intensive resources and approaches are explored first before long-term rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing resources are provided.
- ▶ Incorporate diversion practices within the CE workflow through a phased assessment approach (not all participants are immediately assessed/scored/prioritized).

Strategy 2C: Identify access points and assessment process

■ **Theme:** Crisis Response System

Action Steps:

- ▶ Identify and continually assess access point resources across all of Imperial County to achieve full geographic coverage for the CE process.
- ▶ Create a community-wide shared diversion approach, tool, staff buy-in/training, and data collection to increase effectiveness of reducing inflow into the homeless system.
- ▶ Develop marketing tools to ensure access points are well-advertised and accessible.
- ▶ Institute a phased assessment approach with a progressive engagement orientation to maximize both consumer and staff time given to the assessment process..

Goal 2: Design and Operate a Functioning Coordinated Entry System

- ▶ Address stakeholder input to determine how and if the community should employ the VI-SPDAT or a different tool as the primary CE assessment tool in a phased assessment approach
- ▶ Design and implement quality control measures to bring a higher level of reliability to the assessment process.

Strategy 2D: Create a prioritization policy that prioritizes households in need of housing and services based on vulnerability, housing barriers, and need.

■ **Theme:** System-Level Coordination

Action Steps:

- ▶ Address stakeholder input to locally define what role (or array of roles) emergency shelter should play in Imperial County; shape prioritization based on community design and input, including connections to inmates who will be released from prison.
- ▶ Create a prioritization approach to match the participants most in need of a housing resource to openings across all available housing interventions.

Strategy 2E: Create an operational process to match eligible households with limited homeless resources throughout Imperial County.

■ **Theme:** Housing Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Create simple, visual referral workflows to clearly define each party's roles, expectations, timelines, and duties when a housing match occurs, in order to promote successful referrals for consumers; reduce the time between referral and housing program enrollment; and maximize housing program capacity.
- ▶ Define standards for referral rejections, including uniform procedures for programs to deny referred clients, and create a system to ensure adherence.
- ▶ Support shelter and housing providers in adopting Housing First through training, funding opportunities, and leveraged supportive services.

Strategy 2F: Design feedback loop and evaluation process for the CE system.

■ **Theme:** System-Level Coordination

Action Steps:

- ▶ Facilitate ongoing planning and stakeholder consultation concerning the implementation of coordinated entry.
- ▶ Create a policy on how to annually solicit feedback from participating projects and from households that participated in coordinated entry during that period.

Goal 3: End Homelessness in Imperial County

- ▶ Create written policies and procedures to describe the frequency and method of evaluation, including how project participants will be selected to provide feedback.
- ▶ Include a policy that describes a process by which the evaluation is used to implement updates to existing policies and procedures.

Goal 3: End Homelessness in Imperial County; Move People who are Experiencing Homelessness into Permanent Housing as Quickly as Possible

Strategy 3A: Pursue strategies such as reallocation and permanent supportive housing bonus funds to expand permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing through CoC program funds.

■ **Theme:** Housing Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Review IVCCC FY19 CoC Program application for possible ways to increase points. The CoC Program application debrief provided by HUD does not give feedback on all the questions in the CoC application. Rather, it provides some general comments and insight into questions HUD chose to comment on publicly. The CoC may benefit from an independent review of its 2019 application to gain a more thorough critique of areas that could have been improved upon and to identify possible changes for 2020.
- ▶ Review the FY20 CoC Program notice of funding availability (NOFA) for point maximization. When the FY20 NOFA is released, the CoC should review closely HUD's point structure, policy priorities, and other guidance.
- ▶ Review existing CoC Program projects for performance to determine reallocation or restrictions of budget.
- ▶ Closely review data from the Annual Performance Reports (APRs), system-level System Performance Measurements (SPMs), and any monitoring visits.
- ▶ For those programs that are not performing well, the CoC should seek technical assistance to address performance issues or consider reallocating those resources to another program or program model.
- ▶ IVCCC should consider reallocating at least a portion of the funds to a new program.

Goal 3: End Homelessness in Imperial County

Strategy 3B: Continue to apply for California Emergency Solutions and Housing (CESH), Housing for a Healthy California, Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), No Place Like Home (NPLH), and Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) state funds.

■ **Theme:** Housing Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Utilize available state funding sources as leverage to develop larger housing complexes scattered through the county, with a combination of supportive housing and affordable housing.
- ▶ Identify and apply for additional funding to support development of new affordable housing units.
- ▶ Explore funding opportunities for acquisition and rehabilitation of existing facilities that can be converted or restored into affordable housing.
- ▶ Convene housing developers, consumers, service providers, local planning departments, and county staff to explore new ways to create and streamline affordable housing for targeted populations. Work with local jurisdictions to promote affordable and supportive housing developments.
- ▶ Explore modifications to local regulations that could incentivize development of affordable housing or reduce existing barriers to new development.

Strategy 3C: Increase the number of units in private housing available to persons transitioning from homelessness.

■ **Theme:** Housing Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Encourage HUD multifamily housing owners to create a homeless preference.
- ▶ Explore opportunities to encourage owners of HUD-assisted housing to adopt a homeless preference.
- ▶ Work with the local public housing agency and HUD multifamily housing owners to create a “move on” strategy for those currently in permanent supportive housing or rapid re-housing. This strategy would provide private owners with tenants who have a demonstrated successful tenancy and would make permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing units available to those who are currently homeless.
- ▶ Explore California proposition that allows development within residential property.

Strategy 3D: Create a property owner/landlord engagement initiative.

■ **Theme:** Housing Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Launch a CoC-wide campaign to engage property owners using national and local promising practices (e.g. highlighting the benefits of partnering with housing programs, underscoring the available supportive services, etc.).
- ▶ Train staff on property owner engagement and retention. Ensure that both frontline and supervisory staff are trained on effective engagement and relationship-building strategies for retention of partnerships with property owners.
- ▶ Create a property owner mitigation fund. Draw on county resources or philanthropic entities to create a flexible fund that may be used to pay for costs that other funders (e.g., HUD, HCD) do not allow, such as property owner sign-on bonuses, damages, security deposits, and tenancy preservation. In other communities, the availability of such funds has encouraged owners to rent to people who are homeless (even though in actuality the funds are often left untapped).

Strategy 3E: Maximize Housing First opportunity. Housing First is a proven approach that should be implemented system-wide as well as at the project level.

■ **Theme:** System-Level Coordination

Action Steps:

- ▶ Train all levels of IVCCC membership, including both direct service providers and IVCCC board members, on Housing First program design and delivery.
- ▶ Consider providing a Housing First intensive course to address community opposition and misunderstanding regarding Housing First, its effectiveness, and other issues.
- ▶ Create a learning community, or community of practice, for providers who want a venue to share the challenges and successes of implementing a Housing First approach with their peers.
- ▶ Monitor all IVCCC-funded and state funded homeless programs for compliance with Housing First principles. Provide technical assistance and/or establish remedial action for programs that do not follow a Housing First approach.

Goal 3: End Homelessness in Imperial County

Strategy 3F: Use data to lead planning and programming priorities.

■ **Theme:** Crisis Response System

Action Steps:

- ▶ Ensure that HMIS is able to generate reports to help the IVCCC and county monitor progress on systems performance measures, and other reports as requested to allow the IVCCC to make meaningful planning decisions. Reports should be available on the program level and systems level.
- ▶ Create a mechanism to collect data on potential “previous homelessness” in the absence of a statewide HMIS data warehouse, and incorporate this information into system performance measure (SPM) calculations.
- ▶ Continue to work with other California CoCs to develop the statewide data warehouse.
- ▶ Target one or two SPMs to improve in the next year. Reducing first-time homelessness should be prioritized as one of the measures to target.
- ▶ Pilot an expansion of data collection to Health and Human Services agencies and hospitals. Upon review of the pilot’s effectiveness, consider further expansion to other medical settings as a means to collect data on high utilizers of emergency services.
- ▶ Continue to encourage participation in HMIS for all homeless service providers — not just limited to those receiving CoC or ESG funding.

Strategy 3G: Ensure that resources and services are available to formerly homeless households in order to maintain their tenancies.

■ **Theme:** Housing Resources

Action Steps:

- ▶ Expand partnerships and resources.
- ▶ Set CoC-wide standards for a certain number of home visits that could identify risks for homelessness. Train provider staff on how to practice these standards.
- ▶ For CoC providers who conduct their own annual recertification of housing conditions, incorporate additional questions and observations that may indicate a risk of homelessness.
- ▶ Rally one of the large employers in Imperial County to participate in an employment pilot program in which a number of jobs are set aside for formerly homeless individuals to access. Work with existing agencies to provide job coaching.
- ▶ Provide updated information and education of new and current California landlord-tenant and property laws.

Conclusion

The IVCCC leadership will be charged with developing a structure in which the strategies and action steps described in this plan may be carried out. Part of this process must include establishing responsible entities for each task, a realistic timeline for the completion of action steps, and measurable outcomes to hold the community accountable to the goals set forth in this plan.

Responsible entity: The person(s), committees, subcommittees, or partners tasked with leading the implementation of a particular action step.

Timeline: The timeframe in which the action step is expected to reach completion. The CoC may deter-

mine whether the timeline should be specific (e.g., January 2022) or less so (e.g. short-term, medium-term, long-term).

Measurable outcomes: CoC decision-making on how each of the goals will be measured as implementation of this plan moves forward. For example, the community may choose to use an ongoing evaluation of the CoC's System Performance Measures to determine whether or not it is successful in decreasing the number of new households entering the homeless crisis response system.

Conclusion

As the IVCCC moves forward with implementation of this ambitious plan, continued cross-county commitment and engagement will be an essential component. Given the many challenges it currently faces, including a vastly rural geography and high unemployment rates, the CoC will need to be both innovative and collaborative to prevent and end homelessness in the community.

This strategic plan outlines an aggressive, multi-year effort to target resources to end homelessness. The CoC will oversee implementation of this plan. These key metrics will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of this plan:

- Increase in the number of affordable housing units dedicated to people who are homeless
- Decrease in homelessness in the community including in key subpopulations such as families, Veterans, and people who are chronically homeless
- Decrease in the number of persons who become homeless for the first time
- Decrease in the average and median length of time persons remain homeless
- Decrease in the percentage of persons who return to homelessness
- Increase in the percentage of adults who gain or increase employment or non-employment cash income over time
- Increase in the percentage of persons who exit to or retain permanent housing

To be successful, the plan will require broad community support for expanding data collection, sharing data, and using data as a planning tool. The target priorities and recommendations in this plan are based on currently available data, but growing knowledge will allow for continuous review and refinement of strategies as circumstances change.

Appendix A: State and Federal Funding Resources

The charts on the following pages provide an overview of the predominant federal and state resources used to develop, operate and fund supportive services and housing resources for people who are extremely low income and/or people experiencing homelessness.

The charts are broken out to focus on the three activities:

- development of affordable housing
- operations/subsidy
- supportive services

Each chart lists the following information:

- title/name of each program/resource
- funding and regulatory source
- eligible uses

These charts are intended as a tool to guide an understanding of federal and state resources that may be available to fund programs serving people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Some resources are funded annually, and some are one-time grant funds; agencies interested in learning more specific information for each program should read additional NOFAs, RFPs, and Notices to learn more about each program/funding source.

Resources for the Development and Operation of Homeless Housing and Programs

Eligible Activities		Eligible Use of Funds							
DEVELOPMENT		DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES					HOUSING TYPES		
Program	Source	Acquisition	Pre-development	Rehabilitation	New Construction	Permanent Financing	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Permanent Housing
Affordable Housing Program (AHP)	Federal Home Loan Bank			X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	HUD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Emergency Housing and Assistance Program – (EHAP-CD)	CA HCD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)	HUD			X		X	X		
Governor’s Homeless Initiative (GHI)	CA State bond measure					X			
HOME Investments Partnership Program (HOME)	HUD	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Housing Enabled by Local Partnerships Program (HELP)	CalHFA	X	X				X	X	X
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)	HUD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)	Federal/State	X		X	X	X		X	X
Multifamily Housing Program (MHP)	CA State bond measure					X		X	X

Resources for the Development and Operation of Homeless Housing and Programs

Eligible Activities		Eligible Use of Funds								
DEVELOPMENT		DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES					HOUSING TYPES			
Program	Source	Acquisition	Pre-development	Rehabilitation	New Construction	Permanent Financing	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Permanent Housing	
Residential Development Loan Program (RDLP)	CalHFA	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Redevelopment Housing Set-aside	Redevelopment Agencies	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Special Needs Housing Finance Program	CalHFA	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	HUD	X		X	X	X		X		
Supportive Housing Program (SHP)	State bond measure					X				
Supportive Housing Program for Persons with Disabilities (811)	HUD	X	X	X	X	X				
Tax Exempt Bonds – (Bonds for 501c3 Charitable Organizations)	Federal/State	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Tax Exempt Bonds -- Qualified Residential Rental Projects	Federal/State	X		X	X	X		X	X	
Title V Program	HUD & HHS	excess federal property deeded or leased to eligible non-profit organizations						X	X	X
VA Grant Program	DVA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Multifamily Housing Program-Supportive Housing (SHMHP)	CA State	X	X	X					X	
Housing for a Healthy California	CA State	X	X	X	X				X	

Resources for the Development and Operation of Homeless Housing and Programs

Eligible Activities		Eligible Use of Funds							
DEVELOPMENT		DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES					HOUSING TYPES		
Program	Source	Acquisition	Pre-development	Rehabilitation	New Construction	Permanent Financing	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Permanent Housing
No Place Like Home (NPLH)	CA State	X	X	X	X				X
Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA) (SB 2)	CA State	X	X	X	X				X
Veterans Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program (VHHP)	CA State	X	X	X	X				X
Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC)	CA State	X	X	X	X				X

Rental Assistance & Subsidy Programs

Operations		Operating Subsidies						
Programs	Source	Homeless Prevention	Operating Assistance	Rental Assistance	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Permanent Housing	Supportive Housing
Emergency Food and Shelter Program	FEMA	X	X	X	X			
Emergency Housing and Assistance Program—Operations	CA HCD		X		X	X		
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)	HUD	X	X					
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)	HUD	X	X	X				
HUD- Veterans Administration Supported Housing (VASH) Program	HUD			X			X	X
Section 8- Housing Choice Voucher Program and Public Housing	HUD			X			X	X
Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation for SROs	HUD			X			X	X
Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	HUD		X	X		X	X	X
Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth (TLP)	HHS		X		X	X		
VA Homeless Providers Per Diem Program	DVA		X		X	X		
California Emergency Solutions and Housing Program (CESH)	CA State		X	X	X		X	X
Housing for Healthy California	CA State		X	X				X
Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP)	CA State		X	X	X			

Formula / Block Grants

Supportive Social Services		Funding for Social Services								
Social Services Funding	Source	Mental Health	Substance Abuse	Employment Assistance	Transportation	Case Management	Medical Serv./AIDS	Life Skills	Childcare	Other
		Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDB)	HHS							
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	HUD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (CMHS)	HHS	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	HHS		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Education for Homeless Children and Youth	DoE				X	X			X	X
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)	HUD				X	X				
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)	HUD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Medicaid (Medi-Cal)	SSA	X	X			X	X			
Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)	CA/DMH	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)	HHS/ SAMHSA	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Ryan White	CA/DH	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)	HHS		X	X	X	X		X		
Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Block Grant (SAPT)	HHS	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF/CalWORKs)	SSA/ Cal DSS	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Categorical Funding

Categorical Funding	Source	Mental Health	Substance Abuse	Employment Assistance	Transportation	Case Management	Medical Serv. /AIDS	Life Skills	Childcare	Other Planning
Emergency Housing and Assistance Program — (EHAP)	CA HCD				X	X				
Health Care for the Homeless	HHS	X	X		X	X	X			
Minority SAP & HIV Prevention Services Program	HHS	X	X			X	X			
Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	HUD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Targeted Capacity Expansion (TCE)	HHS		X							
Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth (TLP)	HHS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Treatment for Homeless Persons	HHS	X	X	X	X	X		X		
VA Homeless Providers Per Diem Program	DVA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP)	CA State						X			X
Homeless Housing Assistance Prevention (HHAP)	CA State									X

