



SONOMA COUNTY FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN **2021–2026**

Implementation Update on Recommendations from the *Assessment of Housing and Homeless Services and Programs Report*

In April 2021, the County received a consultant report with recommendations on County housing and homeless services programs - *Assessment of Housing and Homeless Services and Programs Report*. In March 2021, the County also adopted a five-year Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan's Healthy and Safe Communities pillar includes several objectives directly aligned with the Consultant report recommendations. Since then, the County has increased regional and cross-departmental collaboration in support of report recommendations. This is an update on the implementation of these recommendations within the framework of the County's Strategic Plan Healthy and Safe Communities pillar. This update presents the progress achieved at the strategy, funding, and program optimization levels.

The County continues to enhance countywide cooperation around housing and homeless services. The Community Development Commission (CDC) has been working in partnership with the Continuum of Care Board (CoC Board) to support countywide representation, coordinated services, and cooperation at the funding level. The County is also collaborating with city partners on a unique countywide strategy to tackle homelessness.

Countywide Housing and Homelessness Strategy

The CDC and Cities within CoC are on track to develop a single, unified Strategic Plan by December 31, 2022, as well as a Homeless Action Plan (HAP), which the Board is considering during today's Board Meeting under a separate agenda item. This unified strategy aims to strengthen the current housing and homelessness infrastructure and systems through a housing first, data-centered approach. This recommendation and action are in line with a specific objective in the County's Strategic Plan (HSC 4.2) that calls for stronger cities partnership and the importance of a countywide strategic plan for homeless prevention and housing.

Funding optimization

The CDC and CoC are strengthening their collaboration by jointly applying for Sonoma County's share of new State and Federal dollars associated with Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Affordable Housing. Both the County and CoC have emphasized using State Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) funds for Project Homekey PSH and Interim Housing support. Additional progress was made via the assignment of Project-Based Vouchers to Homekey PSH and other affordable projects. Current achievements also include:

- 1) Blending funding for Homekey projects,
- 2) Putting County discretionary funds into projects across the region,
- 3) Considering a more advanced centralizing housing search/location,
- 4) Soliciting Continuum of Care input on the use of Measure O funds, and
- 5) Increasing the use of vouchers for homelessness.

Staff have also been working on a draft MOU to formalize the County's role as CoC Lead Agency to support a long-term funding plan and joint efforts in tackling state-level challenges and opportunities such as securing steady sources of funding.



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Program Optimization

Since June 3, 2021, an internal team composed of the County Administrator's Office, Policy Grants and Special Projects Division (CAO - PG&SP), Human Services Department (HSD), the Community Development Commission (CDC), and the Department of Health Services (DHS) staff has been convening on a weekly basis to implement report recommendations pertaining to program optimization. The team developed a County Housing and Homelessness Programs Inventory. The inventory provides a comprehensive picture of the County's diverse housing and homelessness services offerings. It describes 53 programs, services provided through each program, funding received and sources of funding, contracted providers, and data systems and reporting tools used. In addition to helping identify program optimization opportunities, the inventory provided a baseline for understanding where there could be opportunities for changes in organizational structure to achieve greater efficiencies, effectiveness, and reach. Other program optimization achievements include:

- **Adopting a No Wrong Door Approach** (Strategic Plan HSC 1.3). The Board of Supervisors approved \$350,000 in Year 1 Strategic Plan funding to support this approach to allow clients needing County services to receive services regardless of where they enter the system. To date, County staff have surveyed all client-facing staff to identify the most requested services and how clients describe needs. They've also completed an assessment of 2-1-1 reports to confirm the most requested services, designed a brochure featuring the most solicited services and contact details, surveyed Safety Net staff to understand desired training needs, and have begun to make updates to the County website. Brochure production and a distribution plan are in progress. A "no wrong door" training program is also being developed for client-facing staff and service providers.
- **Expanding the Use of Performance Measures and Results-Based Accountability.** The internal team is supporting efforts to strengthen data tracking using the results-based accountability (RBA) framework. RBA will be used for planning, reporting, and tracking performance measures of County programs and contracts with plans for complete adoption in the next 3-5 years. The team leveraged the Housing and Homelessness Programs Inventory to identify all programs with contract values greater than \$50,000 and compiled a shortlist of contracts for the first implementation phase. Streamlining the adoption of a consistent, countywide performance measures framework will increase transparency, help identify project strengths and limits, and enhance data-based decision-making.
- **Establishing Strategic ACCESS COHORT Populations** (Strategic Plan HSC 2.1). Identifying gaps in services and how departments can address those gaps directly is an ongoing County objective. Some successes achieved include the Interdepartmental Multi-Disciplinary Team (IMDT)- Expansion team (expanded HEART COHORT), the **creation of new cohorts such as Project HOMEKEY cohort, the inclusion of city staff in County cohorts,** and the programming of a Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) cohort in coordination with Probation and HSD. These new cohorts will provide critical services to high-need individuals.