



Legislation Text

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To: Board of Supervisors of Sonoma County

Department or Agency Name(s): Department of Health Services

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Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Homelessness Regional Efforts including Strategic Plan, Funding, and Contract Services

Recommended Action:

- A) Adopt a resolution supporting the Sonoma County Continuum of Care's Regional Strategic Plan on Homelessness for 2023 - 2027.
- B) Authorize staff to issue a notice of funding availability (NOFA) for homelessness services, funded by \$3.0 million of Measure O fund balance from the Behavioral Health Homeless category, including the adoption of a related Budget Resolution.
- C) Adopt a resolution authorizing the acceptance of \$300,000 in bonus reallocated Emergency Solutions Grant - Coronavirus (ESG-CV) funds for the Continuum of Care's rapid-rehousing programs.
- D) Authorize the execution of a Professional Services Agreement of up to \$102,500 in Continuum of Care and city-contributed funds with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to manage and tabulate results from the 2023 Point in Time Count of sheltered and unsheltered unhoused individuals and families in Sonoma County.

Executive Summary:

The Continuum of Care Board (CoC Board) and multiple stakeholder groups have worked with a consultant ([Homebase <https://www.homebasecc.org/>](https://www.homebasecc.org/)) over the past year to prepare a region-wide Strategic Plan on Homelessness for the 2023-2027 period. The Plan includes multiple strategies and implementation steps, generally surrounding these three themes: (1) **More Housing and Prevention**; (2) **Stronger Supportive Services**; and (3) the need for the County, cities, and service providers to **Operate as One Coordinated System** to reach functional zero in homelessness.

Adoption of the resolution will codify the Board of Supervisors' approval of the Regional Strategic Plan on Homelessness, just as the Continuum of Care Board did on December 14, 2022. We expect the Plan to be further adopted or supported by cities. Following adoption of the Plan by cities and other governing bodies that participate in the Continuum of Care, County staff, city staff, CoC members, and service providers will work to implement the Plan, focusing on the Plan's first year implementation actions.

This agenda item will also authorize the Department of Health Services (DHS) to issue a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) on behalf of the County consistent with the Strategic Plan's objectives using up to \$3 million of unallocated Measure O funds.

Two other items relating to homelessness are included as well - in the case of both actions, the the Board of Supervisors is acting as the contracting authority for the Continuum of Care (the CoC generally cannot enter into contracts on its own).

The 3rd recommended action would adopt a resolution that allows the Continuum of Care (CoC) to accept \$300,000 in newly-reallocated Emergency Solutions Grant - Coronavirus (ESG-CV) funds targeted for Rapid-Rehousing (RRH) programs. These funds were reallocated from other jurisdictions that did not use them, and, if approved by the Board, will be awarded competitively among those service providers in Sonoma County who have demonstrated success in implementing effective RRH programs. The funds must be spent by September 30, 2023.

The 4th recommended action would authorize the CoC Lead Agency staff to execute a contract with Applied Survey Research (ASR), the firm that has helped administer and tabulate the region's Point in Time Count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless. Staff hopes to put this out for a request for proposals in time for the 2024 Count, but that is in part up to the Continuum of Care (as the CoC provides the resources and direction for the Count).

Discussion:

I - The Continuum of Care's Strategic Plan.

The March 2021 [Sonoma County Strategic Plan Health and Safe Communities Pillar Goal 4 Objective 2](https://socostrategicplan.org/healthy-and-safe-communities/) <<https://socostrategicplan.org/healthy-and-safe-communities/>> directs that County staff work with the CoC Board, cities, service providers, and others to complete a regionwide Homelessness and Housing Strategic Plan by 2023. To that end, staff from the Lead Agency of the CoC Board, the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC), worked with the COC Board to issue an RFP in Fall 2021 to solicit proposals from firms that could complete the Strategic Plan. After a review of proposals and interviews the top firms, the Strategic Planning Committee of the CoC Board recommended the selection of Homebase, a Bay Area firm that works with local governments and others on homelessness programs and solutions.

More About the Process. The COC Strategic Planning Committee (SPC - see Attachment G for members of the SPC) began work with the Homebase Team and staff from the CDC and the Department of Health Services (DHS) in December 2021 with a review of the current environment and initial meetings with the SPC. Together with Homebase LLC, the SPC outlined a scope of work that included community and service provider partner outreach, research, regular meetings, plan preparation, and final plan development over the course of Calendar Year 2022.

The SPC, staff, and Homebase LLC met regularly throughout 2022, including a "front end assessment" (a review of the entry point of Sonoma County's homelessness system of care, where individuals and families experiencing or about to experience homelessness either are exited from justice system or health care settings, are evicted or otherwise lose housing, interact with street outreach and emergency shelter, and more), sessions with stakeholders as noted below, and other largely on-line sessions. The teams also reviewed data associated with our system of care.

Following the October and November 2022 review of a draft plan, the CoC Board approved the Plan unanimously at a continued regular meeting on December 14, 2022. Board of Supervisors' approval is

envisioned now, followed by review and adoption by (we hope) each Sonoma County's nine cities during February, March, and April 2023. Continuum of Care Board members have offered to present and discuss the Plan with the Councils on behalf of the CoC. Following adoption by the Board, DHS staff work with planning partners to further prioritize 2023 and other early action steps. The resolution adopting the Plan is Attachment A. The Plan itself is Attachment B.

Stakeholder & Public Involvement. All meetings of both the CoC Board and the SPC were publicly noticed and open to the public. In addition, specific stakeholder involvement was invited from:

- Sonoma County elected officials
- Members of the business community and tourism industry
- Persons and groups most responsible for homelessness funding
- Coordinated Entry System (CES) users/staffers
- Crisis Response team representatives
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data users/staffers
- Managers within agencies in positions of leadership. Coordination, and policy
- Persons with w/Lived Experience of Homelessness
- Permanent Housing developers
- Supportive services providers
- Persons with direct experience with ethnic and racial inequities in the homelessness system of care
- Our community service provider partners

What the Plan Recommends. The Plan's adopted vision statement is as follows:

The (homeless) system of care in Sonoma County strives to be a leader in preventing homelessness, and in ensuring that people experiencing homelessness are supported in achieving housing stability, mental and physical wellness, and economic welfare through a collaborative, client-driven system of care that quickly and effectively delivers accessible, dignified treatment and services.

During the course of the discussions across the year, **three major themes** emerged - these are as follows (taken directly from the Plan):

- 1. Invest in more housing and prevention.** It is imperative to reduce the inflow of people into homelessness and create more pathways to long-term housing stability. Doing so will require investments in both homelessness prevention and housing solutions.
- 2. Strengthen supportive services.** The current system of care strains to meet the complex and diverse supportive services needs of people in the community who are experiencing the crisis of homelessness. That strain is felt not only by people experiencing homelessness, but also by homeless service providers. Building supportive services capacity is critical to ease this strain and better meet the needs of those in a housing crisis.
- 3. Operate as one coordinated system.** Sonoma is a large county with many local governments and a broad array of service providers and other stakeholders whose work directly or indirectly impacts homelessness. To achieve functional zero milestone (where homelessness is prevented or is rare, brief, and one-time), partners across the county must work to develop shared priorities, aligned investments, seamless coordination, and equitable solutions to the crisis of homelessness.

The “**high priorities**” within the three themes include:

- I. Prioritize and fund interventions that are most likely to reduce chronic homelessness, including evidenced-based Housing First projects, such as Permanent Supportive Housing.
- II. Fund new permanent housing solutions and new temporary housing solutions in a long-term goal ratio of up to 75% permanent housing units and 25% interim housing units. This ratio may be different in the early years of the Plan - with more funds going to interim housing - in order to increase solutions for the number of individuals without places to safely reside in 2023 and 2024.
- III. Expand existing temporary housing programming to provide more non-congregate settings, housing-focused case management, and supportive services.
- IV. Ensure direct service providers’ staffs are paid competitive wages and benefits for Sonoma County, receive adequate training and support, and have caseloads that align with best practices for serving a target population.
- V. Fund new and renewing programs that have demonstrated success in supporting people experiencing homelessness in achieving housing stability. The homeless system of care should strive for a funding ratio of up to 80% to existing, evidence-based, or proven programs and 20% to innovative or “promising practice” program concepts with evaluation plans.
- VI. Develop a new vulnerability assessment, prioritization, and placement process that results in equitable housing placement. A year after use, examine (and revise if needed), to ensure that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals/families receive equitable placement.
- VII. The system of care should allocate funds based on need and aspire to provide the same access to quality services no matter where an individual lives in Sonoma County.

The plan also includes **action items** that drill down a bit further. The below action items are prioritized for direction or execution by the DHS (as Lead Agency for the COC) for 2023:

- In alignment with Built for Zero, establish a single By Names List (BNL) to better serve all individuals experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County (3.6a)
- Create a new vulnerability assessment, prioritization, and placement process to replace the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) that includes an analysis of individuals’ housing strengths and results in equitable housing placement (3.7a)
- Develop a robust communication strategy to keep the public and individuals experiencing homelessness more informed of services, policy changes, challenges, and successes (3.5a)
- Strengthen and prioritize the supportive services in the existing homeless response system (2.1a+b)
- Build an effective and equitable subregional street outreach model (2.5b).
- Adopt a long-term funding strategy for homeless services (3.1b)
- Ensure the system of care and its individual programs are evaluated based on key performance metrics (3.4a) that include:
 - Placements into permanent housing,
 - Retention of permanent housing,
 - Reducing the length of time homeless,
 - Returns to homelessness,

- Increased client income (earned and non-earned)
- Add 200 permanent supportive housing (PSH) and 100 non-congregate shelter beds (1.2a, 1.3a)
- Ensure an effective transition of the Lead Agency staff from the Community Development Commission (CDC) to the Department of Health Services (DHS).

About Subregionalizing Street Outreach and Case Conferencing. The Strategic Plan's recommendations on street outreach, developed in part following a January - June 2022 assessment of the "Front Door" to the homeless system of care, as well as our community's involvement with the Built for Zero campaign, which has tasked us with creating a countywide BNL of people experiencing chronic homelessness, is likely to result in a significant change in our region's street outreach strategy. In the Plan's view, an effective street outreach and case conferencing model:

1. Covers all areas of the Sonoma County geography with street outreach that has a consistent housing-focused approach
2. This geographic coverage would be achieved by creating "sub-regionalized" service areas.
3. Each subregional service area would have a project manager (could be a city or a service provider staff member) who develops and coordinates the BNL and deploys that subregion's outreach (for example, the City of Petaluma is finalizing an RFP that would create two new outreach teams whose clients and caseloads would be directly assigned from the BNL).
4. To prevent the formation of silos, there will be regular countywide coordination and case conferencing meetings:
 - a. The BNL managers will meet on a regular basis to troubleshoot and share best practices
 - b. Subregional BNLs will be synced with the countywide coordinated entry system to ensure the highest priority clients can access countywide supported housing; and
 - c. Existing County teams such as IMDT (as well as other teams) will begin to shift to triage higher needs clients where local street outreach needs higher level behavioral health and substance use disorder care - regardless of where the client is located.

Racial Equity Toolkit. The below summarizes how this effort was viewed through the Toolkit:

1. **The Proposal.** The Strategic Plan intends to reach Functional Zero in homelessness (where homelessness is brief, one-time, and rare) in an effective, human-centered way using a series of strategies that are short, medium- and long-term. This has the ability to impact families, communities, the environment, health, housing, jobs, parks, workforce equity, and more.
2. **The Data.** From the 2022 Sonoma County Point in Time Count, the data tells us that white and Latino identifiers are represented in the homeless population in generally the same percentages as the general population, but the Black and Alaska Native/Native American identifiers are over-represented in the homeless population when compared to the general population. We anecdotally observe that homelessness programs and services tend to be sited in locations that are at or below median income. It would be helpful to know more about successful transitions from homelessness by ethnicity or race. The Strategic Plan includes a recommendation to have stronger data in this regard.
3. **Community Engagement.** Community engagement has included a targeted effort to consult with members of the BIPOC community. Further engagement would be ideal and recommended as the Plan's

action steps are refined and implemented. Ideally, too, the CoC Board and the SPC's forward iterations would have more BIPOC representation.

4. **Analysis and Strategies.** The largest strategy that should directly impact the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community is the development of a new assessment, prioritization, and placement process (see High Priority VI and Action Strategy 3.7, Steps 3.7a-I on page 40 of the plan) to replace the currently-used VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool). Many believe that use of the VI-SPDAT leads to prioritization of non-BIPOC persons, and that a better process can eliminate that inequity. The Strategic Plan directs the change in 2023, along with a regular review and analysis of how the new process should improve BIPOC housing placements. If it does not, the CDC/DHS team envisions continuing to re-work the process until it does.
5. **Implementation.** Implementation steps for the Strategic Plan are within the Action Steps and the steps' 2023 Lead Agency activities. The steps associated with Strategy 3.7 are clear, and many are part of the 2023 efforts.
6. **Accountability and Communication.** Action Steps 3.7a, 3.7b, 3.7c, 3.7d, 3.7e of Strategy 3.7 on page 40, and other steps suggest a **regular, annual scorecard back** to the CoC Board and to other stakeholders such as the Board of Supervisors to maintain accountability with the promises within the Strategic Plan.

What's Next. Should the Board of Supervisors approve the Strategic Plan, it would then go to the cities in Sonoma County for consideration. Regardless of further approval, once approved by both the CoC Board and the Board of Supervisors, staff at the CoC (at DHS) will go forward in implementing the action steps as described in Strategy 3.8 of the Plan.

II - The Measure O NOFA. Approximately \$3.0 million is available from Measure O fund balance (Measure O is the ¼ cent sales tax passed in 2020) and can be allocated (via a competitive Notice of Funding Availability or NOFA) towards homelessness projects and programs that support the Strategic Plan. The NOFA (Attachment C) envisions funding:

- **Shared Housing or Master Lease Programs** that provide permanent housing for persons ready for housing with varying levels of supportive services. These programs (already housing-focused) should have a success rate of less than 6% "returns to homelessness" of the client base.
- **Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS)** programs that may include modifications of existing physical structures (such as existing congregate shelters) to improve client privacy and separation, new NCS modular shelters or "tiny" homes, or similar programs that accommodate a variety of needs for persons experiencing homelessness. These programs must have a housing-focused approach, with a goal to place at least 30% of clients in permanent housing within 3-6 months of program arrival.
- **24/7 "Safe Parking"** programs that operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (24/7), provide for non-congregate emergency shelter opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness. These facilities may provide recreational vehicle (RV) and trailer parking, auto and truck parking, tent camping, or a mix of each category. Programs must have a housing-focused approach, with a goal to place at least 30% of clients in permanent housing within 3-6 months of program arrival.

- **Permanent Supportive Housing** that can be acquired or constructed and placed into service relatively quickly. These programs (already housing-focused) should have a success rate of less than 6% “returns to homelessness” of the client base. Other concepts not stated above but which are housing-focused interventions that will lead to unhoused individuals securing permanent housing.

Measure O has five specific funding categories, as follows:

Funding Category	Funding Percentage	Available Estimated Fund Balance
Behavioral Health Facilities	22%	\$278,819
Emergency Psychiatric/Crisis Services	44%	\$9,459,549
Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Outpatient Services	18%	\$4,552,954
Behavioral Health Homeless Care Coordination	14%	\$4,303,042 (this NOFA’s funding source)
Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing	2%	\$55,439

DHS staff also reviewed the NOFA with an equity lens and made changes accordingly.

III - ESG-CV Reallocation for the Continuum of Care’s Rapid Rehousing programming. In late 2022, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) notified the CoC that the CoC was successful in securing \$300,000 in additional Emergency Solutions Grant - Coronavirus (ESG-CV) funds. These funds were those initially returned to the State from other jurisdictions. The Sonoma County region scored highly on our reallocation request, thanks to effective and timely spending of the County’s and the CoC’s ESG-CV funds in 2021 and 2022 in the amount of \$6.6 million for the County and \$5.7 million for the CoC (total \$12.3 million).

This agenda item asks the Board of Supervisors, on behalf of the Continuum of Care, to adopt a new (and required) resolution (Attachment D) that would receive and then distribute \$300,000 in funds. In this specific case, the \$300,000 can go only towards rapid-rehousing programs and will be allocated by the Continuum of Care based on a competitive process offered to those programs who have already demonstrated success with RRH programming. The funds must be distributed and spent by September 20, 2023.

IV - Point in Time Admin Contract with ASR. Applied Survey Research (ASR) has been administering the region’s PIT Count for over a decade and have brought good data quality and collection methods to the Count. The Continuum of Care is the entity that coordinates their contract via the CoC Lead Agency staff here at DHS. Because this contract is \$102,500, it is over the authority under which the Lead Agency staff can execute it. Thus, this request to authorize signing the contract on behalf of the Continuum of Care (as shown in Attachment E). The 2023 PIT Count is set for January 27, 2023, but much of the work is done on the back end, after the count, as the data review and analysis occurs. We expect detailed results from the 2023 PIT Count by September 2023.

Strategic Plan:

Conducting and completing a region-wide Homelessness Strategic Plan with the CoC and cities was specifically called out in Sonoma County's Five-year Strategic Plan. As such, it is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Healthy and Safe Communities

Goal: Goal 4: Reduce the County's overall homeless population by 10% each year by enhancing services through improved coordination and collaboration.

Objective: Objective 2: Partner with cities to build a Strategic Plan for Homelessness Prevention and Housing Strategies by 2023.

Prior Board Actions:

In late 2021, the Board of Supervisors, acting on behalf of the Continuum of Care, authorized entering into an agreement with Homebase to complete the regionwide strategic plan.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY 23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$102,500		
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$1,675,000	\$1,625,000	
Total Expenditures	\$1,777,500	\$1,625,000	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal (CoC ESG-CV)	\$175,000	\$125,000	
Fees/Other (CoC Funds)	\$102,500		
Use of Fund Balance (Measure 0)	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$1,777,500	\$1,625,000	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

There is no direct fiscal impact of adopting the Plan. The Plan envisions short-, medium-, and long-term investments in housing and homelessness that will be discussed at the Board level as well as with the Continuum of Care Board, cities, and service providers.

The NOFA envisions expending up to \$3,000,000 in Measure O fund balance towards capital and operational programs consistent with the NOFA and Strategic Plan. The Homelessness Services Division in DHS will administer these funds. \$1,500,000 requested in FY22/23, the remaining \$1,500,000 will be included in the FY23/24 budget through the budget process.

The \$300,000 in State ESG-CV funds are funds assigned to the Continuum of Care but administered through the County (DHS Homelessness Services), as Lead Agency.

The \$102,500 for the PIT Count contract is within the existing budget for the Continuum of Care and consists of US HUD Continuum of Care dollars as well as some contributions from those local jurisdictions that seek

additional detail on their jurisdictions' PIT numbers.

Appropriations of \$1,675,000 for FY22/23 will be added during the 2nd Quarter Consolidated Budget Adjustments. Attachment F is a related budget resolution.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Not applicable at this time.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Resolution Adopting the 2023-2027 CoC Strategic Plan

Attachment B: CoC Strategic Plan

Attachment C: Measure O NOFA

Attachment D: Resolution Relating to ESG-CV Funds

Attachment E: PIT PSA with Applied Survey Research

Attachment F: Budget Resolution

Attachment G: Membership of the Strategic Planning Committee

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A