

CA-512 – Daly/San Mateo County CoC
2022 CoC Plan for Serving Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Severe Service Needs

P-1c. Landlord Recruitment.

(1) The CoC has implemented CoC-wide trainings focused on housing-focused case management, building effective landlord partnerships, and motivational interviewing. These trainings support case managers, housing navigators, and other program staff to better navigate working with and building rapport with landlords and participants. The CoC has providers working throughout the CoC geographic area to recruit landlords and their units for use with the CoC's tenant-based rental assistance. Additionally, the CoC has invested local resources to fund a Housing Locator program. The services provided by the Housing Locators are for individuals and families who are homeless and have been approved for a housing voucher following a referral from the Coordinated Entry System (CES). This applies to all the tenant-based PSH vouchers and most OPH vouchers in the CoC. Once the referral is made, the Housing Locator works with the individual participant to identify any key pieces of information needed about the type of housing they are seeking and preferred neighborhoods/locations. The Housing Locator then supports in identifying potential units and negotiating with landlords to help participants access the housing options. Housing Locators actively respond to landlord concerns and support the development of partnerships between landlords and the homeless services/housing systems as well as the landlord and participant. In addition to the Housing Locator service, the program provides financial assistance to support the building of relationships with the landlords, including covering rental application costs (such as for credit check reports, application fees, and other administrative fees), security deposit assistance, landlord mitigation fund, and gap funds for other housing or case management related support (such as furniture, food, and clothing). For tenant-based PSH vouchers and other housing voucher programs, the Housing Authority provides landlord incentives in the form of cash bonuses to new landlords with the Housing Authority for continuing with the program in the event of turnover, and up to 1 month's rent to cover inspection and paperwork processing time directly prior to lease-up. Using the strategy outlined above, especially the Housing Locator supports, the CoC has been very successful in leasing up EHV's in a timely manner. This has allowed the CoC to hold the highest utilization rate in the State of California for their EHV vouchers according to the HUD EHV Data Dashboard on 10/9/2022.

(2) In the past three years, sparked by the need to hold events online during the COVID-19 pandemic, the County took its annual landlord event virtual, which has made it more accessible. Also, The San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA, CoC Lead Agency) and its Housing Locator contractor participate in the Housing Operations and Policy Committee (HOP) workgroup with our jurisdiction's public housing authority, other CoC Steering Committee members, and other stakeholders. The HOP workgroup puts on an annual landlord recognition and recruitment event, referred to as Housing Heroes, during which interested landlords learn about the process, hear success stories, talk with participating landlords, and connect with Housing Locators. Converting the annual landlord recognition event into a virtual event during the pandemic has also raised the profile of that recognition event. The event is now held as part of a County Board of Supervisors meeting, which has expanded the reach of the event and enabled a broader audience to learn about its efforts.

The Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo (HACSM) offered a separate housing voucher education event virtually for interested landlords, which lowered barriers for landlords to learn about the process of renting to tenants using vouchers. To support participants in obtaining housing faster, the non-profit agency that the CoC and the Housing Authority have contracted with for housing location services, Abode Services, has increased the use of master leasing in cases where voucher holders face special barriers to leasing up. As part of these efforts, the CoC has increased supports to landlords, including offering a landlord hotline for after-hour emergencies.

To further enhance landlord recruitment efforts, the CoC has increased its use of flyers, posted strategically, to reach landlords. Additionally, HSA worked with the ESG recipient to use ESG-CV to expand housing location embedded at larger adult shelters for shelter residents that see lower rates of exit to permanent housing. As of early September, HACSM had the highest utilization rate for Emergency Housing Vouchers (97%) according to HUD's dashboard, thanks in large part to the Housing Locator program, which provided the housing location services required to be paired with EHV vouchers.

The efforts over the past three years built on previous work and successes in recruiting and working with landlords. The CoC has learned that virtual events are preferable given their accessibility. The CoC has also learned that landlords are interested in more information regarding the community's subsidy programs, which the CoC have provided via marketing materials. In addition, the success of providing Housing Locator services with housing vouchers has reinforced the importance of providing targeted, focused support to voucher holders.

Outcomes from this program highlight its importance, particularly in a housing market as competitive as San Mateo County's, and is visible through the success seen with the exceptional EHV utilization seen by San Mateo County (97.3% and #1 in the state on 10/9/2022).

(3) The Housing Locator contractor distributes landlord surveys and reviews data for ways to improve its landlord recruitment and customer services strategies. Additionally, HSA will use the temporary (ESG-CV-funded) enhanced housing location services and the differing models used at each adult congregate shelter program as pilot data to inform how housing location services are offered in future at shelters. HSA will work to identify future funding to continue the most effective models with other funding once ESG-CV funding expires. HSA will also explore expanding housing location services to households not connected to any subsidy program, based on outcome data from the ESG-CV program.

P-3.a. Current Street Outreach Strategy.

(1) The CoC's Street Outreach teams work with and refer individuals and families to Street Medicine, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), Core Service Agencies, and other partners. Furthermore, outreach teams collaborate with jurisdictional staff and other key stakeholders to develop and implement plans to provide additional services and coordination of services to people living in encampment areas or areas with multiple recreational vehicles (RVs) and other vehicles being lived in.

In addition to the jurisdictional stakeholder collaboration and referral networks, Outreach teams coordinate during monthly multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) meetings organized by the CoC's

geographic regions, where outreach staff report on each client receiving case management services and present their housing-focused case plan, updates on progress, barriers, and challenges. The MDT participating agencies provide suggestions, resources, and sometimes also offer direct assistance to the clients in collaboration with outreach staff. Further, all outreach programs utilize HMIS, meaning that they can all view data from the other outreach teams and use HMIS as a tool for service coordination/collaboration. Finally, the CoC facilitates a monthly meeting of the CoC's Street Outreach teams and representatives from the Coordinated Entry System (CES) to help coordinate service delivery.

(2) There are multiple street outreach teams operating within the CoC, which allows for thorough coverage of the CoC's geographic area and broad outreach times. There is coverage by various outreach teams between the hours of 7am - 4:30pm Monday through Friday, and coverage on Saturdays and Sundays as well (specific weekend hours vary, but include at least 7:30am-6pm one weekend day each week). There is also a specialized outreach team focused on nighttime hours in one area of the CoC, which operates 8pm-2am four days a week with some weekend hours as well. In addition to the regularly scheduled hours, the outreach teams provide services in additional night and weekend hours on an ad hoc basis and based on specific client needs.

(3) The CoC acknowledges that Outreach and Engagement are essential to building relationships based on trust and respect between clients and service providers and are a key step toward permanent housing. Outreach teams in San Mateo County are trained to connect people to homeless service providers, interim housing options, and other mainstream services. Outreach teams also conduct a specialized Outreach-CES mobile assessment to support connecting people who are unsheltered with CES, providing access to interim and permanent housing options. Outreach teams are made up of housing-focused case managers. Case managers help clients move into housing by assisting navigating the housing voucher process when the client is matched via CES; applying for other subsidized housing opportunities, such as section 8 and affordable housing waitlists; and other case management support, including exploring moving in with family or friends, increasing employment and non-employment income, etc.

(4) Street Outreach in the CoC targets unsheltered households who have been unsheltered the longest and/or have the highest barriers to re-entering and maintaining housing. Furthermore, street outreach efforts in the county are low-barrier, meaning individuals are not required to be clean and sober, to have completed or currently be in treatment, to be compliant with medication prescription, to have income or employment to access outreach, and will not be screened out for "lack of motivation." To keep the outreach efforts accessible and feasible for people with the highest vulnerabilities, outreach is conducted in areas where people who are unsheltered are known to stay and spend time.

Street Outreach staff are trained to implement best practices to engage people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including assertive outreach techniques, motivational interviewing, and more. CES refers unsheltered people with higher service needs to case management services through the Outreach teams so that they can receive case management services to assist them with locating and entering housing. Outreach teams receive training on and have experience with providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services. This includes providing services to clients who speak a language other than English. Outreach teams also have staff who have lived experience of homelessness and who share cultures with the population of people experiencing homelessness. Outreach teams also maintain a close working

relationship with the County's Behavioral Health and Recovery Services programs in order to collaborate to serve people who are unsheltered and have mental health and substance use treatment needs.

(5) Outreach teams work to engage with people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness and assist them with returning to housing. The outreach teams work to build rapport with the individuals they encounter, and the outreach team works to support them with accessing permanent housing through conducting the Outreach-CES mobile assessment and connecting them with the Core Service Agencies for full CES assessments to be prioritized for CES linked housing opportunities. Outreach teams provide housing-focused case management to help clients move into housing by assisting each client with developing and implementing a housing plan. Housing plans may include exploring moving in with family or friends, applying for affordable housing programs, assisting client with navigating if matched to a housing program via CES, increasing employment and non-employment income in order to afford rental housing, etc.

(6) The CoC's Street outreach teams and their agencies all have hiring plans that include recruiting employees who have diverse experiences, including lived experience of homelessness. As a result, many outreach teams have substantial lived experience on staff. One outreach agency's Executive Director and Direct Services Manager both have lived experience of homelessness. At another agency that operates an outreach program, 20% of staff have lived experience.

At the systems level, the CoC recently hired a Lived Experience Analyst, who will develop and implement strategies and structures for people with lived experience of homelessness to be actively engaged with and contribute to 1) community and system planning for the homeless crisis response system and program planning, and 2) implementation of homeless service programs by non-profit homeless service provider agencies.

P-3.b. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.

(1) San Mateo County has been working diligently to expand shelter options and availability for people experiencing homelessness within the CoC in order to provide immediate access to shelter. This includes significantly increasing the CoC's stock of non-congregate shelter since 2020 to serve individuals who historically are unable to accept congregate shelter. All shelter and temporary housing for unsheltered individuals and families in the San Mateo County CoC must be provided in a culturally appropriate manner and must implement a Housing First approach, ensuring low barriers to program entry and program rules designed to minimize involuntary client terminations from programs. Low entry barriers mean that there are no sobriety requirements, service participation requirements, or other entry criteria designed to screen out households based on lack of "housing readiness." In 2021, the community expanded non-congregate shelter with an additional 125 units. In 2022, an additional 44 units opened. There will be an additional 240 units of non-congregate shelter coming online in 2023. The CES will be able to more rapidly and effectively connect unsheltered households to shelter units that meet their needs and provide a safe place to stay until permanent housing is located.

(2) Since 2020, San Mateo County has invested in establishing non-congregate shelter for individuals and families in the community, with plans for additional non-congregate shelter to be

launched in 2022/2023. There are also plans for an adult congregate shelter expansion project to be launched in 2022/2023. The County has worked to increase investment in interim housing options through new local and state funding, though there are still not enough options for all of the unsheltered population in the community. Part of the CoC's strategy to decrease unsheltered homelessness in the community is to also expand upon the existing PSH in the community. By increasing the PSH available, the CoC will be able to work to increase exits to PH from homelessness, allowing for more individuals and families from shelters and unsheltered locations to exit homelessness. In FY 2021/2022, around 74% of people engaged in street outreach entered into shelter/temporary housing. As the availability shelter increases when the additional beds open in the next year, it is expected that the number of clients engaged in street outreach gaining access to shelter will increase as well.

(3) During the COVID-19 pandemic, San Mateo County expanded non-congregate shelter options to provide increased safety and supports for people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic. Through this experience, the CoC and County learned that there was high need for more non-congregate shelter in the community. Many people experiencing homelessness appreciated the increased privacy and security, as well as the opportunities to keep pets and for adult couples to stay together in shelter. Additionally, many people expressed they were more willing to enter a non-congregate shelter than a traditional congregate shelter. Given the response from the community and evidence that non-congregate options are preferable to congregate shelter units for many households, the CoC has specifically sought resources and opportunities to continue to expand non-congregate shelter options across the county.

P-3.c. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low Barrier Permanent Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.

(1) The Human Service Agency (HSA, the CoC lead) manages a central referral list for CE placement. CES includes multiple "front doors" or access points, including street outreach teams. Individuals and families are placed onto the central referral list once they have completed an assessment through one of the access points. The CE referral list prioritizes households according to the scored CE assessment by vulnerability among adults and families, then refers households to the next available housing program opening. As established in the CoC governance charter and CoC program standards for RRH and PSH, permanent housing programs are expected to accept the households referred by CE unless they are deemed ineligible based on funding restrictions. HSA tracks CE referrals and reasons for refusal in HMIS and is therefore able to identify whether a specific program is creating barriers to program entry.

The CoC has adopted a systemwide policy on Housing First that has been adopted in the CoC Governance Charter and states that the system prioritizes rapid placement and stabilization in permanent housing and there is an expectation that programs will not have service participation requirements or preconditions such as sobriety or a minimum income threshold. Participation in these services is based on the needs and desires of the program participant. Operational program standards for ES, TH, RRH and PSH include expectations regarding program access, participation, and termination that align with Housing First. The CoC has also developed and provided written guidance to all CoC-funded providers on how to align their policies to the CoC standards. Each CoC-funded program provider's Housing First policies and procedures are reviewed as part of the CoC rating and ranking process, and points are awarded to those projects that are consistent with CoC requirements. Programs identified as having challenges with

Housing First principles in their program eligibility/screening are invited to meet with HSA to discuss and problem solve to lower barriers.

HSA regularly provides training offered to providers of outreach, shelter, and housing programs on housing-focused case management. HSA also reviews project performance data regularly, including exit destinations. Programs identified as having high rates of exit to non-PH situations, performance challenges or challenges with employing Housing First principles in program operations are invited to meet with HSA and a technical assistance provider to discuss and problem solve to improve their ability to help participants secure housing and avoid returns to homelessness from programs.

(2) HSA's contracted outreach providers are expected to provide housing-focused case management to clients prioritized by CE who are unsheltered as well as targeted supports to unsheltered households most likely to face barriers returning to housing. Outreach teams take a low-barrier, culturally responsive approach to engaging with unsheltered households to ensure all households contacted can access interim and permanent housing when they are ready. Outreach case managers often work together with Housing Locator staff to provide consistent support until lease-up. The CoC piloted a Housing Voucher Navigation program aimed at individuals living unsheltered who are at the top of the CE prioritization list but are not connected to shelter or street outreach teams to assist with navigating the housing voucher/subsidy eligibility verification process once matched by CE. The street outreach and Housing Locator program staff includes members fluent both in the Spanish language and in local Latinx culture to reflect the needs of the clients they serve.

(3) The CoC is continually working to refine strategies to rapidly and effectively connect households, including unsheltered households, to permanent housing locations.

With current strategies over the past three years, 12% of households exiting outreach programs exited to permanent housing destinations. In addition, the Housing Voucher Navigation Program has housed 19% of clients served to date, and 26% of all clients who exited in the past 2 (local) fiscal years.

75% of Housing Locator clients who entered from unsheltered situations in the past three years moved into housing. While there is room for improvement, housing placements from unsheltered locations would be substantially lower without these resources and strategies in place, given San Mateo County's current housing market with high rents and low vacancy.

(4) HSA has increased outreach in the CoC, which in turn has increased the ability to match unsheltered households to PH programs through CE. The CoC elected to use time-limited state funding to pilot a program targeting households living in vehicles for rapid rehousing by assisting with either entering brick-and-mortar housing options or leasing up at an RV park with utilities connections. Households selected different options depending on their personal housing goals. HSA has ensured that local Safe Parking programs created in recent years refer households to CES and enter data in HMIS to ensure that participants in these programs may be matched to PH through CE. In 2019, the CoC elected to pilot Housing Voucher Navigation program with time-limited state funding to individuals living unsheltered who are at the top of the CE prioritization list but are not connected to shelter or street outreach teams to assist with navigating the housing voucher/subsidy eligibility verification process once matched by CE to

that resource. Further, as a result of the pandemic and emergency response to the health crisis, executive leadership of the County Health System convenes biweekly meetings specifically to discuss how to best support people who are unsheltered and have high service needs, and to enhance how Health programs (including mental health, substance use treatment programs, physical health, etc.) work with homeless outreach and housing programs. The HEAL program was funded and re-launched because of advocacy from Health leadership. This program's staff are mental health clinicians who specifically serve the unsheltered population. They join the outreach teams to serve unsheltered people where they are living.

P-4. Updating the CoC's Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance.

The San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA, the CoC Lead) is in the process of creating a dashboard for the County Executive's Office, which will raise awareness of challenges faced and of housing resources necessary for ending households' homelessness episodes. As the HMIS Lead, HSA will use the Stella data tool and other data analysis tools provided by technical assistance providers to continually analyze the homeless system and recommend funding shifts and additional funding necessary to right-size permanent housing programs according to need. Relevant data include program performance data by type and by CE assessment score; household compositions and sizes; income amounts and sources; and disabling conditions of households seeking services. HSA will also work to identify trends among households returning to homelessness to improve on permanent housing supports and homelessness prevention strategies. HSA will consult the CoC's Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) for input on improving access to and features of permanent housing programs and their Housing Locator services. The Housing Locator team will continue to survey landlord partners for information on ways to improve recruitment and retention of landlord partners.

(1) HSA assesses the performance of current Street Outreach practices based on 9 performance measures to ensure consistent and strong performance of the provider(s). The measures include:

1. Number of unduplicated clients who move into permanent housing
2. Number of unduplicated clients who move into shelter
3. Number of unduplicated clients who are connected to ongoing health services
4. Number of unduplicated clients who are assisted to connect with Diversion and complete a CES assessment
5. Number of individuals who receive outreach and engagement services each Fiscal Year
6. Number of households who receive outreach and engagement services each Fiscal Year
7. Percentage of rapid response inquiries responded to within 24 hours of the inquiry being made
8. Number of unduplicated individuals who receive case management services
9. Number of unduplicated households who receive case management services

Providers are required to work to incorporate best practices and perform continuous quality improvement to ensure the services offered are best suited for the client's needs. Through regular engagement, the County is made aware of any increased need or concerns with capacity that may require scaling up outreach services in the community. All Street Outreach programs funded through the County, and/or the CoC, must participate in connecting people to CES or completing the Outreach-CES mobile assessment, and all data must be entered into HMIS. Outreach

programs are also required to engage in collaborative efforts with community and jurisdictional stakeholders and partner system representatives. There is a strong partnership between the outreach work in San Mateo County and the Health system. The Outreach Teams work to structure and maintain multi-disciplinary team collaboration.

(2) HSA will continue to track shelter wait list numbers daily and will use this information to inform the need for additional shelter capacity. HSA will continue to build on existing feedback from system clients and others with lived experience of homelessness by increasing non-congregate shelter options. HSA will consult the CoC's Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) for input on improving access to and features of shelter and temporary housing programs. HSA will use funds to cover new HMIS license costs to add two new outreach provider agencies that will be serving a specific region, and to connect more providers of all types to HMIS, which will enhance identification and connections to shelter and permanent housing. HSA has also worked to gather input from shelters and from people with current/recent lived experience through surveys and focus groups to gain better understanding of the performance of shelters, where there may be gaps in services that need to be filled, and what may be done to improve the accessibility of shelter in the community.

One of the programs selected through the CoC Competition for this Special funding opportunity, Retraining the Village SSO, will provide services like outreach that will also include case management and housing navigation services to support clients to enter into housing and stabilize and maintain their housing once enrolled and moved in. This will provide a continuous opportunity for clients to be connected to supportive services as they transition from unhoused to rehoused. The agency brings to program design and implementation significant experience using an equity lens, experience working with people experiencing homelessness who have involvement with the criminal justice system, and experience with the CoC's collaborative work with providers and other stakeholders. This agency will enhance the CoC's overall services and shelter programs, equity approaches, service to people with criminal justice involvement, and overall client-centered program design.

(3) HSA will continue to assess the performance of current Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing projects based on 5 performance measures to ensure consistent and strong performance of the provider(s). The measures include:

1. Number of unduplicated clients who exit to or retained permanent housing
2. Percent of unduplicated adult clients who increased non-employment income
3. Unit utilization rate
4. Percent of grant expenditure
5. HMIS data quality

HSA also tracks timeliness of housing placement following program enrollment for its contracted RRH providers.

P-5. Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness.

(1) When advertising the local competition for this funding opportunity to area providers, the CoC emphasized the focus on addressing unsheltered homelessness. Project applications were

scored based on how the individual project contributed to this CoC Plan for Serving Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Severe Service Needs and contributed to the CoC's efforts to reduce unsheltered homelessness. The CoC prioritized PSH projects through the scoring process for project applications to align with the CoC's priority and strategy to increase PSH available in the community. Projects funded underneath this opportunity will provide needed capacity to the CoC's system, which includes multiple strategies for targeting participants that are harder to reach and serve. There were two projects funded through this opportunity. One of the projects funded under this opportunity will create PSH which will reduce unsheltered homelessness by accepting and housing referrals from CES of people with long lengths of homelessness and high needs. The second project provides system and housing navigation services to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to improve their access to housing and other services, thus reducing their length of time homeless and reducing returns to homelessness.

(2) Programs throughout the CoC's system are required to adhere to low-barrier, Housing First principles. Shelters/interim housing programs include as few criteria for enrollment as possible. New non-congregate shelter programs that are coming online in 2022/2023 further expand access by enabling couples to stay together, by allowing people to bring their pets, and otherwise eliminating or reducing barriers to entry. Outreach programs are similarly designed to eliminate barriers to entry and connect people to permanent housing whenever possible.

The Coordinated Entry System (CES) connects people to shelter services as quickly as possible, including through outreach teams who are connected to unsheltered households with severe service needs. CES's assessment tool is designed to make shelter and permanent housing referrals based on need. It takes into account length of time homeless and other factors to help prioritize those with the greatest need. CES works directly with outreach teams to do shelter placements and CE assessments with people who are unsheltered. Outreach workers can request permission from the person they are engaging with before contacting CE to be allowed to share any and all information the person has already told the outreach staffer so that they don't have to repeat everything to CE and CE won't have a duplicative diversion or other conversation whenever possible as a result.

(3) The CoC uses street outreach to connect people living in unsheltered situations to permanent housing through the following strategies and activities:

- Reducing barriers to housing, including helping clients become document ready
- Providing intensive case management to willing clients
- Working with each client to develop and implement a housing plan to return to permanent housing
- Assisting clients with connecting with other services to meet their other needs (mainstream supportive services, health services, etc.)
- Referring and serving households with the highest needs to case management services through outreach
- Participating in Multi-disciplinary teams (MDT's); MDT's serve as a forum in which to find solutions for unsheltered homeless individuals working with outreach staff; Case conferencing within an MDT enables outreach staff to partner with other local homeless service providers to identify clients' needs and resources, and to utilize the broad base of experience to assess and plan the most appropriate course of action; for clients matched

to housing via CES, helps client navigate housing voucher eligibility process and apply for affordable housing lists, as well as explore alternative resolutions including renting a room or moving in with family/friends

(4) The CoC is taking additional steps to ensure people experiencing unsheltered homelessness can access housing and other resources in the community. To better identify households staying in unsheltered locations, the CoC has increased the outreach services in the evenings, nights, and weekends throughout the County. In addition, the CoC is focusing outreach in areas where there is higher need and more people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, in areas where there are the highest numbers of unsheltered individuals, and in areas where unsheltered individuals are harder to locate (such as more rural or coastal areas). Outreach teams provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services, including providing outreach services and materials in languages other than English. Outreach teams also provide assistance to clients with obtaining needed documentation such as identification, including assisting with any fees and providing transportation if needed to attend an appointment to obtain the document.

The CoC ensures those identified can be connected to housing by improving housing navigation services. Specifically, the Housing Voucher Navigation program to connect with individuals who are unsheltered and are at the top of the CES prioritization list, but are not connected to shelter or street outreach teams. This program provides assistance with navigating the housing voucher/subsidy eligibility verification process once matched by CES to that resource.

In addition to connecting people to housing, outreach teams, through their outreach and case management activities, work with and refer individuals and families to Street Medicine, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS); connect individuals and families with health concerns to health services and support individuals and families in staying connected to those services; and collaborate with safety net providers, other homeless service providers, medical and behavioral health providers, substance use treatment programs, and other partners. The county has funded and re-launched the HEAL program because of advocacy from Health leadership in the community. This program provides mental health clinicians who specifically serve the unsheltered population by joining up with outreach teams to be available for street outreach engagement. The San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA, the CoC Lead) has partnered with the Health Plan of San Mateo to provide leverage for the permanent supportive housing program funded through this NOFO. This leverage will provide critical health services for high need individuals that will improve their health and housing outcomes.

P-6. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making – Meaningful Outreach.

(1) The San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA, the CoC Lead) staffs and coordinates the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG). Staff sent out targeted emails to staff at multiple levels of homeless and safety net providers to recruit individuals with current or prior lived experience of homelessness. Outreach included reaching out to street outreach, shelter, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing programs, and also related partners such as the criminal justice system, affordable housing providers, and health programs. The purpose of LEAG is to obtain lived expertise for incorporation into decision on homeless system and program policies and funding priorities, including this Special NOFO. In September 2022, HSA hired a Lived Experience Analyst to focus on building upon existing strategies and developing

further strategies to gather meaningful input from people with lived experience on an ongoing basis. This analyst will research best practices in the field, make recommendations to the CoC and to provider agencies, and implement additional strategies to further engagement with people with lived experience.

(2) The LEAG is a formal subcommittee of the CoC Board. The CoC Board may, at times, request the LEAG's input or feedback on specific strategies or items. In addition, the LEAG has the authority to independently bring forth concerns and ideas to the CoC Board, in accordance with the CoC Governance Charter. One member of the LEAG is also a voting member on the CoC Steering Committee. One aspect of the work that the LEAG has begun is providing feedback to the County's lead director for substance use services on the policies, access processes, and operations of substance abuse services for people experiencing homelessness. Prior to establishing the LEAG as an ongoing and formal opportunity for people with lived experience to inform the CoC's strategies, policies, and activities, the CoC maintained ad hoc opportunities for people with lived expertise to be involved in CoC decision-making. The process for developing the 2022-2025 San Mateo County CoC Strategic Plan on Homelessness brought together a broad range of people with lived experience of homelessness. In April and May 2022, HSA facilitated focus groups with people with lived experience of homelessness, who were either staying in emergency shelter or living unsheltered. These groups included single adults and families with children, and people from throughout the County geography, including the Coastside region.

The focus groups were hosted at shelters to meet directly with shelter residents and allow them to share their experiences and provide suggestions to help our CoC improve our homelessness response system. Additionally, a focus group specifically for individuals that were currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness was hosted at a neutral location. Shelter staff and case managers were not present during the focus groups to ensure that individuals could speak candidly about their experiences. All focus groups also had a native-Spanish speaker present to ensure that all voices were heard and represented.

Each focus group had between 5-15 individuals present, and client responses were kept anonymous. A variety of questions were asked, including sharing their experience with accessing shelter, what services have been helpful, what services are lacking, the housing search process, and other ways the CoC can involve people with lived experience. The San Mateo County Center on Homelessness has also hired a new Lived Experience Analyst (LEA) to develop and implement strategies and structure for people with lived experience of homelessness to engage with and provide input on the homeless crisis response system. The LEA will review existing engagement efforts, gather input from people with lived experience, lead the implementation of planned strategies and structures, and provide input on how policies can be more person-centered. The LEA will assist with boosting the CoC's and stakeholders' capacity to receive and engage with input from people with lived experience directly and indirectly via the Lived Experience Advisory Group.

(3) HSA and the CoC Steering Committee have a strong focus on involving people who are currently or have previously experienced homelessness in the evaluation, design, and operation of the homeless crisis response system. Centering the experiences of people with lived expertise helps ensure the homeless crisis response system is more equitable, person-centered, trauma-

informed, and responsive to what people who interact with the system know that they need. Provider agencies recognize this and many have staff with lived experience of homelessness.

Fostering a system that is person-centered and responsive to the needs and goals of people who experience homelessness requires meaningfully involving them in decision-making about system and program design and implementation. People who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness have unique insights that can help inform the development of policies and programs to improve homelessness response.

HSA has created the Lived Experience Analyst position and launched the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) to support their direct efforts to include the voices of people with lived experience in critical decisions made at the county level and to inform the CoC's work to address homelessness. HSA has engaged the providers within the CoC to learn of what they do at their individual agencies to imbed the voice of persons with lived experience and to discuss strategies to enhance and further the engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness. This effort found that the majority of programs gather feedback and input from one or more of the following approaches: informal conversations, surveys, focus groups, grievance processes, feedback boxes, participant advisory boards, and seats on the agency board. Furthermore, many providers make proactive efforts to offer employment or volunteer opportunities to people with lived experience.

The San Mateo County CoC Strategic Plan on Homelessness (2022-2025) includes listening and responding to the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness to further enhance person-centered approaches in the homelessness response system. We aim to achieve this goal with the following strategies:

- Create regular, ongoing processes for gathering input from people experiencing homelessness and involving them in decision-making on homeless crisis response system implementation (e.g., focus groups, surveys, a lived experience advisory group), including staff working within the system who have had experiences of homelessness.
- Assess and identify how to streamline access processes for services, treatment, and shelter so that people can more immediately access the services and supports they need when they are ready to reach out for help.
- Enhance “customer service” orientation throughout the system.
- Build partnerships, collaboration, and communication between providers and across systems to provide more nimble, responsive, and coordinated assistance for people who are experiencing homelessness.
- Scale up training programs for agency staff to build capacity to deliver trauma-informed, client-centered services.
- Review existing grievance processes.
- Find ways to measure quality of engagement, not just number of contacts that service providers have with people experiencing homelessness.

P-7. Supporting Underserved Communities and Supporting Equitable Community Development.

(1) The CoC is committed to identifying and serving populations in the region that have not historically been served by the system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness. The

CoC has a Racial Equity Committee that meets quarterly to examine existing disparities in the homelessness response system and develop strategies to address those disparities. A racial disparities analysis presented in the August 2022 meeting shows the greatest disparities of people experiencing homelessness compared to the county-wide population were for American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latinx. Black/African American households are especially overrepresented among households experiencing homelessness for the first time. Furthermore, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander households have a longer-than-average length of time homeless. In addition, the Hispanic/Latinx population is overrepresented in the unsheltered population and comprise 47% of people staying in unsheltered areas. The CoC has also identified that more training and support is needed to ensure that LGBTQIA+ people are provided equal access and culturally appropriate services. The San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA, the CoC Lead) provides regular trainings that provide guidance to providers on Equal Access and Serving LGBTQIA+ clients in partnership with consultants and local organizations to address this subpopulation concern.

Through this funding competition, the CoC selected a new project that will perform outreach and services-related activities. The recipient for this project has deep roots and expertise serving the East Palo Alto area of the CoC which is an underserved community. This project will include outreach, case management, housing navigation, and other services all rooted in equity and culturally appropriate services, meeting people where they are at.

(2) Analyses indicate the racial/ethnic composition of those accessing services via the CoC's homeless response system reflects the composition of those experiencing homelessness, except for Hispanic/Latinx individuals who are served by the homeless response system at lower rates than they experience homelessness. In addition, the Hispanic/Latinx population are the least likely of any racial or ethnic subpopulation to access permanent housing through the homelessness response system. Black or African American and American Indian/Alaskan Native households are overrepresented in the population of people experiencing homelessness than in the overall population of the county.

Further, there are two outreach programs in the community that specifically target underserved geographic areas of the community, including East Palo Alto and other areas of south county.

(3) Given the high proportion of Hispanic/Latinx households experiencing unsheltered homelessness as well as the disparities in system access, the CoC is focusing efforts on improving and targeting outreach to better serve the Hispanic/Latinx population. This involves increasing the proportion of outreach programs that can conduct outreach in Spanish, including completing assessments, enrolling households in CES, and offering case management or housing navigation services when available.

The CoC has also increased its capacity to develop strategies to address racial disparities through the Racial Equity Committee, which meets quarterly to examine quantitative and qualitative data to understand racial disparities, release regular reports on system-level disparities, provide trainings for providers and landlords, and identify opportunities to increase representation of people with lived experience in CoC and agency leadership. In addition, HSA recently hired a Lived Experience Analyst who will develop and implement strategies and structures for people with lived experience of homelessness to be actively engaged with and contribute to 1)

community and system planning for the homeless crisis response system and program planning, and 2) implementation of homeless service programs by provider agencies. Embedding this expertise in HSA staff will improve the ability for the CoC to serve the community more equitably. Finally, the HSA has increased funding for outreach programs in recent years to increase capacity, which has allowed for increased connection with people who previously had not been served.