

## Family Homelessness Challenge Grants and Technical Assistance Program: \$40 Million to be Awarded Through Two Rounds of Competitive Grants

As stated in [AB 140](#),

- *The program shall give preference to proposals that promote rapid innovation, accelerate nascent programs, expand promising practices, and meet new demands and conditions for solutions targeted towards ending family homelessness Ch 8. 50256 (2).*
- *Program funding shall be prioritized for jurisdictions that can demonstrate cross-systems collaboration, multifunder initiatives, and innovative efforts that coordinate across funding streams and systems (Ch 8. 50256 (2)).*
- *All recipients of funds shall provide information and products developed with grant funds on service delivery models in support of the overall program goal to create scalable solutions to family homelessness (Ch 8. 50259 (e)).*
- *Require recipients of program funds to provide specified data to their local Homeless Management Information System for tracking in the statewide Homeless Data Integration System (Ch 8. 50259 (e)).*

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August 2021

### Grant Recipients Should be Required to Participate in a Well-developed Program Evaluation

The State should consider adding a well-developed formal program evaluation component to the Family Homelessness Challenge Grants and Technical Assistance Program.

All grant recipients should be required to participate in a multi-site program evaluation that would conceivably contribute to the legislative goal *of creating scalable solutions to family homelessness, and thus, promote rapid innovation, accelerate nascent programs, expand promising practices, and meet new demands and conditions for solutions*

### Legislative Information

[AB 140](#) includes Sections 4 – 14 that outline historic key investments for solving homelessness including the Family Homelessness Challenge Grants and Technical Assistance Program (see Sec 14 Chapter 8). Up until a couple of weeks ago, little was known about the Program.

The following key details about the Program were copied from Sec 14 Chapter 8:

## **Applications**

50257 (b)

*Applications for funding shall include a full description of how the applicant intends to use program funds for rapid innovation, accelerating nascent programs, expanding promising practices, or meeting new demands and conditions where practical work occurs for solutions targeted towards ending family homelessness, and any additional fiscal and programmatic information related to this grant as determined by the council.*

## **Application Timeline**

50258 (a) (1) – (3) (b)

### **First Round**

- *The council shall make available an application for the first round of allocations no later than March 1, 2022.*
- *Applications shall be due to the council no later than 60 days from the date the council makes those applications available pursuant to paragraph (1).*
- *Initial award determinations shall be made no more than 60 days after the deadline to submit applications.*
- *Recipients of funds shall expend at least 50 percent of their first-round allocation by June 30, 2024.*

50258 (c) (1) – (e)

### **Second Round**

- *The council shall make available an application for the second round of allocations no later than December 31, 2023.*
- *Applications shall be due to the council no later than 60 days from the date the council makes the application available pursuant to paragraph (1).*
- *Initial award determinations shall be made no more than 60 days after the deadline to submit applications.*
- *If, after the second round of awards pursuant to this section, not all funds have been awarded, the council may make additional awards or augment existing allocations until all funds have been allocated.*
- *All program funds shall be expended by June 30, 2026.*

## **Distribution of Funds**

50257 (1) – (3)

*Seventy-five percent (\$30 million) of the amount appropriated shall be distributed through two rounds of competitive grants to applicants (county, city, or continuum of care) to be used to accelerate efforts by local jurisdictions to eliminate family homelessness in their communities.*

*Twenty percent (\$8 million) of the amount appropriated shall be set aside for intensive technical assistance to local jurisdictions to support the state’s efforts to reach functional zero for family homelessness.*

*Up to 5 percent (\$2 million) may be expended by the council for the administration of the program. The council may utilize any unused funds from moneys set aside for program administration for technical assistance or to augment existing allocations.*

### **Provision of Data Elements**

#### **50259 (a) – (d)**

*All recipients of funds pursuant to this chapter shall provide data elements, including, but not limited to, health information, in a manner consistent with federal law, to their local Homeless Management Information System, for tracking in the statewide Homeless Data Integration System.*

*The council shall specify the form and substance of required data elements.  
The council may, as required by operational necessity, amend or modify data elements, disclosure formats, or disclosure frequency.*

*Any health information or personal identifying information provided to, or maintained within, the Homeless Data Integration System shall not be subject to public inspection or disclosure under the California Public Records Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 6250) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code).*

*For purposes of this paragraph, “health information” includes “protected health information,” as defined in Part 160.103 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and “medical information,” as defined in subdivision (j) of Section 56.05 of the Civil Code.*

#### **Sec. 30.**

*In order to protect the privacy of individuals’ health information, it is necessary to hold any data elements in the Homeless Data Integration System provided pursuant to the Encampment Resolution Funding program confidential.*

*In order to ensure the privacy of medical information and other personal information of populations served by the Family Homelessness Challenge Grants and Technical Assistance Program, it is necessary to restrict access to certain information in the Homeless Data Integration System.*

### **Recommendation: Program Evaluation Should Be a Requirement**

As previously noted, participation in a program evaluation should be required of each funded applicant to ensure the following Program goals stated in [AB 140](#):

- *The program shall give preference to proposals that promote rapid innovation, accelerate nascent programs, expand promising practices, and meet new demands and conditions for solutions targeted towards ending family homelessness (Ch 8. 50256 (2)).*
- *Program funding shall be prioritized for jurisdictions that can demonstrate cross-systems collaboration, multifunder initiatives, and innovative efforts that coordinate across funding streams and systems (Ch 8. 50256 (2)).*
- *All recipients of funds shall provide information and products developed with grant funds on service delivery models in support of the overall program goal to create scalable solutions to family homelessness (Ch 8. 50259 (e))*
- *Require recipients of program funds to provide specified data to their local Homeless Management Information System for tracking in the statewide Homeless Data Integration System.*

A clearly stated program evaluation component should be included in the State’s application. In addition, program evaluation indicators should be developed and incorporated for effective measurement of the program’s delivery of services.

Twenty percent (\$8 million) of the amount appropriated has been set aside for intensive technical assistance, which should promote program evaluation. Funding should help ensure that core program elements are in place to achieve the ultimate goal of identifying and facilitating scalable solutions to family homelessness.

Planning for program evaluation must begin prior to the application submission period and should originate with State funders concurrent with the program design phase. Planning for program evaluation should also ensure data quality and ways to measure accomplishments quantitatively and qualitatively or via a mixed-methods approach for short-term and mid-term outcomes.

Logic models and Theory of Change models that identify pathways of change and or indicators can serve as important planning and evaluation tools.

#### Housing First/Low Barrier Housing/Trauma-informed Design and Care

[Housing First](#) is an approach that recognizes that households experiencing homelessness must first access a decent and safe place to live before improving health, reducing harmful behaviors, and/or increasing income before obtaining and maintaining permanent housing. A [low barrier approach](#) removes as many preconditions to obtaining and maintaining permanent housing, including active health, mental health, and substance use issues. A [trauma-informed design and care approach](#) eliminates many reasons why households may still struggle to obtain and maintain permanent housing due to past traumatic experiences and fear of re-traumatization.

## One-Time/Fixed/Tapered/Rental Assistance

One-time assistance includes one-month rent, security deposits, and other move-in assistance but no ongoing subsidy. Fixed rental assistance involves paying the full rent during the subsidized period or paying a fixed percentage of the rent during the subsidized period. Tapered rental assistance involves reducing the amount of rent paid over a period of time that may be based on a “housing gap” formula that can change over time if actual rent or actual household income changes.

## Outputs/Outcomes

Outputs should be reported regarding the number of households receiving each type of rental assistance and why each household received their type of rental assistance. However, outputs only reveal if the funded applicant helped households obtain permanent housing but not if the funded applicant helped households maintain their housing, which is the ultimate goal.

Outcomes should be reported regarding households that maintained or did not maintain their housing after they received assistance. The number of households that maintained their housing after they received assistance should be reported for each type of assistance.

Program evaluation can also shed light on the length of time each household received rental assistance. Furthermore, program evaluation findings can also help establish the range of cost for each type of assistance and initial household income for each household, and the amount of household income when rental assistance ended.

Program evaluation should also be concerned with other targeted outcomes, including

- Employment or progress toward job readiness: completion of training program, number of months holding a job, income level, benefits, and career advancement
- Linkages to and progress towards treatment-related services (such as mental health, physical health, and substance use disorder treatment) and health coverage such as Medi-Cal;
- Community-building activities, i.e., proactive efforts to assist households in engaging/participating in the community and neighborhood.

[AB 140](#) states in Ch 8. 50259 (e) that *All recipients of funds shall provide information and products developed with grant funds on service delivery models in support of the overall program goal to create scalable solutions to family homelessness.*

Each recipient of funds providing information and products developed with grant funds within the context of a well-developed program evaluation would conceivably contribute to the legislative goal *to create scalable solutions to family homelessness.*