

Maximizing the Roles and Responsibilities of California's Continuums of Care (CoCs)

- Forging an unprecedented partnership between CoCs and State government, counties, cities, and community stakeholders is timely
- [Recently approved and proposed legislation and budgeted funding](#) provides State government with an opportunity to weave together an unprecedented homelessness strategy that builds upon existing actions and plans
- Maximizing the extensive and influential roles and responsibilities of CoCs would further their current supportive actions and create new supportive opportunities to include in an unparalleled statewide homelessness strategy

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The extensive and influential roles and responsibilities of California's CoCs support several current actions taken by the State to solve statewide and local homelessness that involve 1) local Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS); 2) State's Homeless Data Integration System (HDIS); 3) Coordinated Entry Systems (CES); and 4) annual homeless counts.

The extensive and influential roles and responsibilities of California's CoCs can support several future actions planned by the State to solve statewide and local homelessness, which include

- Expanding the capacity of local HMIS to meet the legislative requirements of recently approved [AB 977](#) that mandates that several state homelessness programs begin to participate in HMIS by January 2023;
- Supporting the [California Interagency Council on Homelessness \(ICH\)](#) efforts *"to establish systemwide performance measures that will help the state and local jurisdictions better assess their progress toward preventing, reducing and ending homelessness in California;"*
- Providing data and participating in interviews to help ICH and research partners complete the [California Homelessness Landscape Assessment Study](#) by the end of 2022;
- Submitting homelessness action plans and specific outcomes required by recently approved legislation and budgeted funding;
- Providing their total unsheltered and sheltered 2022 homeless count to the ICH prior to its legislative deadline to allocate [Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention \(HHAP\) Grant Program](#) Round 4 by September, 2022 so that Round 4 allocations for jurisdictions are not based on the pre-pandemic 2019 total count, which was the case for Round 3 funding; HUD will not release 2022 homeless count totals until after it provides the 2022 [Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\)](#) report to Congress, which historically happens close to the end of the year.

The Extensive and Influential Roles and Responsibilities of CoCs

California's 44 Continuums of Care (CoCs) encompass the entire state and includes all counties and cities (click [here](#) for CoC map). CoCs were collectively awarded more than \$500 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2021, which will likely increase around 10% a year for the next several years.

The extensive and influential roles and responsibilities of CoCs to help solve local and statewide homelessness include:

- Designating a [lead agency](#) whose responsibility is to coordinate a wide-range of public and private partners within its jurisdiction, including federal, state, county, city, and community stakeholders to prevent and end local homelessness;
- Coordinating a [sheltered and unsheltered count and survey](#) of people experiencing homelessness within their jurisdiction at least biennially;
- Compiling a [Housing Inventory Count](#) that is a point-in-time inventory of provider programs within their CoC that provide beds and units categorized by five program types: emergency shelter; transitional housing; rapid re-housing; safe haven; and permanent supportive housing;
- Managing a [Coordinated Entry System](#) (CES) designed to assess, prioritize and match people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate housing solution based on their needs;
- Managing a [Homeless Management Information System](#) (HMIS), which is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness;
- Collecting, storing, and analyzing [System Performance Measures](#) (SPMs) that measures the performance of the CoC's homeless assistance systems (click [here](#) to see SPMs for each CoC);
- Collecting, storing, and analyzing [longitudinal personal-level information](#) about persons who access the homeless service system within their entire region to gain information about how people experiencing homelessness use their system of care;
- Using [Stella](#), which has two modules, a performance module that helps CoCs understand how households move through their homelessness system and highlights outcome disparities, and a modeling module that assist CoCs with developing a vision of the system interventions and capacity needed to end local homelessness; and
- Submitting a [racial equity assessment](#) to HUD as part of their annual CoC program application to help address racial disparities in homelessness assistance.

Forging an Unprecedented Partnership is Timely

Maximizing the extensive and influential roles and responsibilities of CoCs into an unprecedented homelessness strategy would be timely and would further current supportive actions and create new supportive opportunities.

Current supportive actions by CoCs involve

- Providing a local HMIS to meet State requirement that recipients of State homelessness funding participate in a local HMIS
- Submitting HMIS data into the State’s [Homeless Data Integration System \(HDIS\)](#) through a secure file transfer system quarterly that is *“standardized, cleansed, de-duplicated, and matched” to identify “patterns of service usage across geographic regions” to improve data-informed responses to homelessness and support “efforts to identify and address racial and other inequalities among people experiencing homelessness.”*
- Providing a local CES to meet the State requirement that recipients of State homelessness funding participate in a local CES
- Conducting and submitting homeless count results to HUD that are also used by the State to calculate and allocate funds to counties, large cities with a population of 300,000 or more, and CoCs based on their proportionate share of the State’s total homeless population.
- Submitting a homelessness plan in partnership with local public health jurisdictions, county behavioral health, public hospitals, county social services, and local housing departments outlining how the [Housing and Homelessness Incentive Program](#) services and supports would be integrated into the homeless system and include a housing and services gaps/needs assessment.

New supportive opportunities for CoCs include

- Supporting the [California Interagency Council on Homelessness \(ICH\)](#) efforts *“to establish systemwide performance measures that will help the state and local jurisdictions better assess their progress toward preventing, reducing and ending homelessness in California. Once finalized, (ICH) will be updating the HDIS website to focus more on the outcomes of people accessing services through the California homelessness response system.”*
- Ensuring that local HMISs are prepared for recipients of funding for several State-funded programs to enter required data elements into HMIS by January 1, 2023, as mandated by [AB 977](#) Homelessness program data reporting: Homeless Management Information System, which was approved September 2021.
- Providing data and participating in interviews to help ICH and research partners complete the [California Homelessness Landscape Assessment Study](#) by the end of 2022, which *“is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of California’s homelessness response system” and “will identify how the major state programs are being used, who is accessing services and housing provided by those programs, and how the different programs are delivered at the local level” to “inform ways to increase the effectiveness of the full continuum of strategies to end homelessness in California.”*
 - [AB 140](#), which tasked the ICH to complete the study, specifically calls for the use of “homeless point-in-time count, continuum of care housing inventory count, longitudinal systems analysis, and Stella tools” data.

- Supporting the implementation of the ICH’s [Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California](#) and continuing to provide input when updates to the Action Plan are considered.
- Submitting homelessness plans as a requirement to receive the balance of their HHAP Round 3 allocation that includes a local homelessness action plan and specific outcome goals as described in [AB 140](#).
- Submitting an updated local homelessness action plan and new specific outcome goals to receive HHAP Round 4 allocations as described in [AB 140](#).
- Providing 2022 total homeless count results to ICH in time so that HHAP Round 4 funds can be allocated to counties, large cities with a population of 300,000 or more, and CoCs based on their proportionate share of the State’s 2022 total homeless population and not the 2019 or 2020 pre-pandemic total count results. ICH is legislatively required to allocate HHAP Round 4 funds by September 30, 2022; however, HUD historically publishes total count results during the late fall.

Next Step: Unprecedented Dialogue

Unprecedented dialogue should occur between State government and CoC leaders to shape and implement an unparalleled homelessness strategy. Various state agencies, departments, and councils have encouraged dialogue with CoCs. However, the ICH has been tasked with implementing a unique dialogue between State government and CoC leaders.

[AB 1220](#) renamed the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council to the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) and restructured the ICH *“to continue California’s forward momentum towards the state’s broader vision for greater statewide leadership and coordination around its response to the homelessness crisis” and “to develop policies and identify resources, benefits, and services to prevent and work toward ending homelessness in California.”*

[AB 1220](#) states that a goal of the ICH is

“To create partnerships among state agencies and departments, local government agencies, participants in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Continuum of Care Program, federal agencies, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, nonprofit entities working to end homelessness, homeless services providers, and the private sector, for the purpose of arriving at specific strategies to end homelessness.”

[AB 1220](#) also states that

“The council may establish working groups, task forces, or other structures from within its membership or with outside members to assist it in its work. Working groups, task forces, or other structures established by the council shall determine their own meeting schedules.”

AB 1220 further states that

“Upon request of the council, a state agency or department that administers one or more state homelessness programs, including, but not limited to, an agency or department represented on the council pursuant to subdivision (c), the agency or department shall be required to . . . participate in council workgroups, task forces, or other similar administrative structures.”

Thus, the ICH can initiate an unprecedented dialogue by furthering its current dialogue with CoCs by establishing a working group, task force, or other structure in which *“a state agency or department that administers one or more state homelessness programs”* is required to participate and recruit and encourage leadership participation from *“local government agencies, participants in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Continuum of Care Program, federal agencies, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, nonprofit entities working to end homelessness, homeless services providers, and the private sector, for the purpose of arriving at specific strategies to end homelessness.”*