



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

NATHAN FLETCHER
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: November 2, 2021

04

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

RECEIVE UPDATE ON THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SOLUTIONS AND EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES, ADOPT THE FRAMEWORK FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS, AND DIRECT QUARTERLY REPORTS ON THE PROGRESS MADE ON IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Over the last several years, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) has demonstrated its commitment to housing and supportive services that address the needs of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. On April 6, 2021 (06) the Board established the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) within the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency (HHS). The new department launched on July 1, 2021, and consists of the Office of Equitable Communities, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs and the Office of Homeless Solutions.

The HHS has developed a framework to operationalize the Board's guiding principles on homelessness that align the existing work throughout the region to assist people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of experiencing homelessness, with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness. The Framework for Ending Homelessness (Framework) is anchored in five strategic domains: Root Cause and Upstream Prevention, Diversion and Mitigation, Services, Treatment and Outreach, Emergency/Interim Housing and Resources, Permanent Housing and Support. Additionally, each of the five strategic domains is driven by five key commitments that guide the County's approach: Person-Centered, Data, Regional Collaboration, Sustainability, and Equity.

The Framework encompasses the County's ongoing work and provides a vision to support forward, collaborative and impactful progress. Today's action requests the Board to receive the update on the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities and to adopt the Framework for Ending Homelessness.

This item supports the County of San Diego's *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities by improving the lives of persons at-risk of and experiencing homelessness through enhanced funding, innovative new programming as well as creating a framework to guide existing and future regional efforts. In addition, this effort supports the Framework for Our Future

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which prioritizes communities and populations in San Diego that have been historically left behind.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Receive the update on the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities.
2. Adopt the Framework for Ending Homelessness.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to report back to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors quarterly on the progress made on implementing the Framework for Ending Homelessness.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

According to The Regional Taskforce on Homelessness, in 2020 there were at least 27,390 individuals who experienced homelessness in San Diego County. Additionally, the San Diego region conducts a Point-in-Time Count, which identifies the number of individuals living on the streets or in emergency shelters on one specific designated day of the year. In the 2020 count, 7,638 individuals were identified as living on the streets or in shelters throughout the county. Of those who were unsheltered, 58 percent reported having a disability and 27 percent were 55 years or older. Unified under a County of One approach, the County of San Diego is dedicated to addressing the root causes of homelessness and providing preventative and supportive services to the most vulnerable residents. The Framework for Ending Homelessness (Framework) outlines the path toward building the capacity to advance the San Diego County Board of Supervisors priority of addressing homelessness.

People of color are disproportionately impacted among those experiencing homelessness, with 27.2 percent identifying as Black or African American—roughly five times the proportion of African Americans in the region—3.4 percent identified as American Indian or Alaska Native—which is nearly three times the proportion in the region—and 2.8 percent identifying as Asian. Individuals at-risk of or experiencing homelessness, impacted residents, community partners and other key stakeholders will be engaged, and their feedback will be sought and incorporated when appropriate in implementing the Framework.

Ensuring racial and social equity in all aspects of homelessness prevention and response is one of the key principles that guide the Framework. Additionally, securing equitable homeless housing, supports and funding will assist those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness throughout San Diego County. Therefore, it is anticipated that the Framework will provide needed housing and supports to residents who are disproportionality represented in the homeless system including justice involved individuals, individuals with a range of health and social needs, as well as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). In general, the incidence of Black, Native Americans and other persons of color experiencing homelessness mirrors the disparities found at the broader community levels.

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FISCAL IMPACT

While there is no direct, immediate fiscal impact associated with today’s recommendation to adopt the Framework for Ending Homelessness (Framework), items to expand and advance current efforts within each of the strategic domains will be brought forward for Board action as required in the future. The County of San Diego has made significant investments to address homelessness, including ongoing and increased funding for outreach teams, services and treatment, short-term beds including emergency shelter and bridge housing, and mid and long-term housing including much-needed rental assistance and affordable housing development. Investments will continue to increase with the allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds specifically set aside for homeless services and interventions, as well as ARPA dollars allocated for efforts that touch upon upstream areas of the Framework’s strategic domains including services such as eviction counseling and outreach/prevention and direct cash assistance. Also, new funding is available through the State that will aid in various areas of the Framework including Project Homekey to assist in purchasing and converting buildings into interim or permanent housing, and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention funds that can be used flexibly to support homeless strategies across multiple strategic domains. These new resources will be coordinated with existing funding to maximize investments in alignment with the Framework.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

Over the last several years, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) has demonstrated its commitment to housing and supports to address the needs of people experiencing and at-risk of homelessness. On April 6, 2021 (06) the Board established the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) within the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). The new department launched on July 1, 2021, and consists of the Office of Equitable Communities, the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs and the Office of Homeless Solutions (OHS). Since July, work has been done to establish the organizational structure and budget for HSEC. Some additional highlights include:

- All Offices within HSEC are actively recruiting, hiring, onboarding and training staff. The Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs is currently recruiting for a Director position and is in the process of setting up operations.
- The Office of Equitable Communities is in the process of recruitment of six regional community coordinators that will carry on and enhance the large body of regional HHSA work.

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- The Office of Homeless Solutions added thirty-two newly budgeted positions to expand direct outreach and services countywide. HSEC has completed hiring of those positions and staff are currently in training before they begin their deployment in outreach and street case management. OHS is enhancing existing services in Central and South County, will be deploying staff in North County in November 2021 and will begin deployment of staff in East County in December 2021.

The HHSA has developed a framework to operationalize the Board’s guiding principles on homelessness and align the existing work throughout the region to assist people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of experiencing homelessness in order to strategically achieve the audacious goal of ending homelessness. According to The Regional Taskforce on Homelessness, in 2020 there were at least 27,390 individuals who experienced homelessness in San Diego County. Additionally, the San Diego region conducts a Point-in-Time Count, which identifies the number of individuals living on the streets or in emergency shelters on one specific designated day of the year. In the 2020 count, 7,638 individuals were identified as living on the streets or in shelters throughout the county.

Homelessness is a complex issue with a variety of contributing factors. Many of these are indicated in the social determinants of health including but not limited to access to care, housing, income and food security. Despite the robust efforts by the Board to increase the supply of affordable housing, there is more needed to address housing at all income levels. According to the sixth cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), the San Diego region must increase the housing stock by more than 171,000 over the sixth cycle period, of this over 23,000 units are needed for extremely low-income households.

The Framework for Ending Homelessness (Framework) serves to maximize existing and future regional work by creating a unified strategic approach. Each of the five strategic domains of the Framework is driven by five key commitments that guide the County’s approach:

1. *Person-Centered Approach*: The Person-Centered approach is one that emphasizes the unique needs of each person to guide supports and services. This approach ensures that services and programs are created in culturally sensitive ways to address unique needs of various vulnerable populations including but not limited to LGBTQ+, older adults, veterans, foster youth, and justice involved individuals.
2. *Data*: A data-driven approach is one that uses evidence-based policy making to create more effective, equitable and focused outcomes.
3. *Regional Collaboration*: Collaborating across the geographic boundaries through partnerships with jurisdictions, services providers, community partners, stakeholders and others is crucial to aligning efforts to end homelessness.
4. *Sustainability*: A sustainable approach is one that promotes and maintains solutions to ensure housing stability through a variety of financial investments.

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5. *Equity*: Equity is a priority of the County and therefore all aspects of homelessness prevention and response should ensure racial and social equity.

To align existing and future efforts, this Framework is anchored in five strategic domains. These domains represent the continuum of opportunities to end homelessness, by preventing it when possible, and reducing the length of time experienced, by strengthening ways to remain housed.

1. *Root Causes and Upstream Prevention*: This domain seeks to prevent homelessness by focusing on the root causes of homelessness and upstream prevention strategies. Strategies in this domain include addressing poverty and ensuring household stabilization and enrichment through employment programs and income supports, access to basic social services and community empowerment activities.
2. *Diversion and Mitigation*: This domain focuses on interventions that will prevent people who are on the brink of homelessness from becoming homeless, such as short-term rent assistance, mediation, housing search and connections, legal assistance, and creating alternatives to incarceration for persons experiencing homelessness.
3. *Services, Treatment and Outreach*: This domain focuses on interventions that include street outreach, harm reduction, clinical, social and housing support services.
4. *Emergency/Interim Housing/Resources*: This domain focuses on interventions for emergency and interim housing needs with assessment, supportive services coordination and housing navigation.
5. *Permanent Housing and Support*: This domain focuses on providing permanent solutions to affordable housing and the support services individuals may need to maintain permanency.

HHSa currently provides resources and services, often in partnership with other jurisdictions and community partners, in each of the strategic domains including, but not limited to: CalWorks, CalFresh, General Relief, Child care, behavioral health services and supports, transitional and permanent supportive housing. These existing resource and services are aligned with the strategic domains. Building on the renewed commitment in the region, across multiple jurisdictions, and in collaboration with community partners and other stakeholders, this Framework is an opportunity to shift the approach to assisting our neighbors at-risk or experiencing homelessness, from an emphasis on crisis management to a focus on housing solutions. As an example, housing, paired with supportive services, can provide the stability individuals at-risk or experiencing homelessness need, in order to overcome the myriad of social issues that present an obstacle to their ability to become self-sufficient.

While the County currently devotes resources in each of these domains, there is an opportunity to leverage significant additional resources including the \$85 million allocated in the American Rescue Plan Act, funding from a variety of anticipated programmatic funding stream increases, and Project Homekey funds. Additionally, by further enhancing partnerships with local

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jurisdictions and community agencies, even more resources can be leveraged to provide critical services to individuals and families in our region in need.

Today's action requests the Board to receive the update on the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities, adopt the Framework for Ending Homelessness, and direct the Chief Administrative Officer to report back quarterly on the progress made on implementing the Framework for Ending Homelessness.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed actions support the Building Better Health, Living Safely and Sustainable Environments/Thriving initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan by providing assistance to and increasing the availability of services for people experiencing homelessness.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A – Framework for Ending Homelessness