



Legislation Text

File #: 22-0294, **Version:** 1

Health and Human Services Agency recommending the Board receive and file a presentation from El Dorado Opportunity Knocks representatives and community participants on the first draft of the 5-Year Countywide Homeless Strategic Plan and give feedback to the draft plan.

FUNDING: N/A

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND:

On September 10, 2013, Hangtown Haven, Inc., and the Mayor of the City of Placerville provided a presentation on homelessness in the County of El Dorado to the Board of Supervisors (File ID# 13-1132), following which the Chief Administrative Office directed an interagency task force (Opportunity Knocks) convene to examine the issue. The task force consisted of multiple entities in the community, seeking to develop and coordinate a consistent and regional presence and response to homelessness. Over time, Opportunity Knocks deepened its understanding about available funding streams and effective solutions for impacting homelessness. To better position the region to leverage these opportunities, a decision was made in early 2017 by the group to merge with the El Dorado Continuum of Care (CoC).

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires local communities that seek to receive federal homeless assistance funds to maintain a CoC that meets federal regulations. CoCs that meet HUD requirements are local planning bodies that help to coordinate the community's policies, strategies, and activities to prevent and reduce homelessness. The CoC promotes a community-wide commitment to the goal of creating a system where at-risk households can maintain their housing and residents who lose their homes are not forced to remain homeless indefinitely. They help create capacity to connect unhoused residents to housing and supportive services where available. To achieve this, CoCs are tasked by the federal and state governments to track and support residents experiencing homelessness in a local Coordinated Entry System, while tracking data in the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database. These systems allow communities to target limited housing and services to those with the greatest vulnerabilities, often those with the most needs and that create the highest costs to local jurisdictions, healthcare providers, and service organizations.

CoCs must maintain compliance with multiple state and federal funding regulatory requirements which are technical in nature and frequently evolving. Therefore, in FY 2018-19, El Dorado County partnered with Barton Hospital, Marshall Hospital, and the Cities of Placerville and South Lake Tahoe through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to contribute toward a contract with Homebase, a nationally recognized expert on homelessness and a HUD/State of California technical assistance provider. Since that time, Homebase has provided technical support to ensure that the CoC and the County maintain state and federal compliance, while also supporting local homeless service providers with technical assistance in their efforts to improve housing program outcomes and leverage additional funding streams. While this support was being provided, and to improve access to available funding streams, the CoC Board of Directors requested to switch their administrative entity (AE) for submitting and administering applications with the Federal and State government on

behalf of the CoC. The previous AE did not have the capacity to help El Dorado move forward in addressing homelessness at the scale that was needed nor to meet the regulatory requirements of the governmental funders. The Health and Human Services Agency was selected as the AE, and has since successfully applied for and received a number of grants including Homeless Emergency Aid Program, California Emergency Solutions and Housing, Homeless Housing Assistance Program (HHAP) 1 and 2, and more, to fund ongoing activities that would build a robust foundation for the CoC and all of El Dorado and its continued successes.

One requirement of receiving state funding was that county-regions would utilize a portion of the funds to develop a multi-year strategic plan to impact homelessness. These plans have increased successes in countless regions, often creating a 'road-map' for developing and achieving local goals, based upon available data/need.

STRATEGIC PLAN

On September 6, 2019, a special joint meeting of the Cities of South Lake Tahoe, Placerville, and the County Board of Supervisors was held to receive and file a presentation regarding an overview and update on the EDOK CoC and to introduce the development of a countywide strategic plan on homelessness (File ID# 19-1208). To kick off the conversation of the countywide strategic plan on homelessness, the presentation provided an overview of the CoC program, its responsibilities and requirements, specific and recent accomplishments at that time (between 2017 and 2019), and a review of the 2019 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count survey conducted by the CoC. Unsheltered PIT Counts are federally required bi-annually, and the data gathered in the process is used to measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community by collecting information on individuals and families residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as on people sleeping on the streets, in cars, abandoned properties, or other places not meant for human habitation. The PIT Count is the only source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness that is consistently gathered across jurisdictions with the same criteria and definitions, and is required by HUD and the State of California of all jurisdictions receiving federal and state funding. Following the overview of the PIT Count, the presentation concluded with an introduction to the development of the multi-year homeless strategic plan, what was to be expected, and concluded with examples of successful, evidence-based housing programs that exist elsewhere.

The initial and preliminary activities to develop the strategic plan began in December of 2019 and went through March 2020, when the State of California issued its stay at home order due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, at the EDOK meeting held in April 2020, the EDOK Board voted to pause the strategic plan. At that time, in response to the pandemic and the early concerns for protecting local hospital capacity, CoCs were tasked with developing local non-congregate programs for individuals experiencing homelessness to reduce the prevalence of disease being spread, as well as to protect the health and wellbeing of vulnerable homeless residents. Supporting these programs remained a high priority of the state and federal governments in 2021; however, the State began encouraging CoCs to continue with their typical activities of focus in order to continue addressing homelessness over the long-term. At an April 2021 EDOK meeting, the EDOK Board voted to reestablish the development of the strategic plan as a top priority in 2021.

METHODOLOGY/PROCESS

Between the months of December 2019 and February 2020, as well as between the months of April 2021 and December 2021, the CoC held regular and ongoing discussions at its bi-monthly community meetings for residents and participants to establish a vision, mission, and to define the

goals of the plan as well as to conduct provider and stakeholder focus groups and identify overall metrics to later measure plan success. As these foundational areas were developed and drafted, they were brought back to subsequent community meetings for review and feedback, where further discussions were then held to establish priority areas for the plan based upon local data, program and services gaps, the experiences of local providers and partners, and funding requirements from the Federal and State Government. As the priority areas of the plan were being discussed and developed with a wide range of participants, the second phase of community engagement began.

As a core component to homeless strategic planning and development, to ensure that localized feedback, strategies, and initiatives are core pillars, two separate community engagement periods were held, including multiple rounds of surveys and focus groups with various subpopulations, including individuals with current or recent lived experience of homelessness. Each survey period was open over several months, with attempts made to gather input from stakeholders within the homeless system of care and interested community members, as well as those with lived experience of homelessness and poverty. Survey information and links were sent through various listservs, including the CoC listserv, jurisdictional listservs, various nonprofit provider listservs, and more. During this time, the surveys were also posted on a number of websites, including on the CoC website and jurisdictional websites as well various nonprofit provider websites throughout El Dorado. These lists and outreach attempts included non-profit housing and service providers, medical partners, educational partners, faith-based providers, government partners, law enforcement, elected officials, and community members. At the conclusion of the multi-month survey effort, there was additional interest expressed at EDOK meetings to further gather survey feedback. From this, a final survey period was opened for six additional weeks to ensure that the greatest efforts were made to include all who would be interested in filling it out. Through these efforts, a total of 265 surveys were filled out and received. 205 of the surveys were from stakeholders/community members and 60 surveys were from individuals/families with lived experience of homelessness and poverty. The majority of the 205 surveys received (approximately 75%) were from stakeholders within the homeless system of care, and the other 25% were from interested community members. The surveys were utilized to develop tailored, localized strategic goals and initiatives that directly correlate to this community's experiences, today, and were considered as key information to take into account throughout the drafting of the plan.

The final step of community engagement and feedback prior to the plan being drafted was concluded through two public meetings that were held in November and December 2021, the first being held to discuss temporary housing solutions, and the latter to discuss permanent housing solutions. Presentations were offered at these meetings to provide examples of eligible and best practice program types by our funders, examples of those programs across different communities, and where those program types fit within the homeless system response. Throughout the presentations, community comments and feedback were solicited, which were also incorporated into the plan specific to the strategies that were most supported and identified as high priorities by participants.

The first draft of the plan was then completed between December 2021 and February 2022, thereafter being publicly posted and made available for the final phase of community feedback and comment on Friday, February 11, 2022. The feedback and comment period is open for three weeks, until March 4, 2022. An important step in developing the final draft of the plan is for comments and feedback to be received for a multi-week period to ensure that the process has allowed for as wide of community participation and input as possible, while maintaining its focus on direct feedback from persons with lived experience and local services providers, best practices and proven solutions, and

the requirements of the federal and state governments as funders. Following the feedback period, revisions will be incorporated whenever possible, and a final version of the plan will be completed, posted publicly, and made widely available. The final plan will meet state and federal funding requirements, including specifically for the current HHAP grant for which the plan is required. It will also highlight areas of need that will have the greatest impact on homelessness, locally, while acting as the framework utilized by the State to understand what EDOK and all providers in the community will be focusing on with the HHAP grant and other State funding. Once submitted to the State, El Dorado County and EDOK will be eligible to receive an additional amount of approximately \$1.4 million dollars, combined, to pay for strategies associated with the plan.

OUTCOMES

Through Opportunity Knocks evolution between 2013 and 2022, and through merging with the CoC program, EDOK CoC has developed a foundation for a system response to homelessness while significantly improving system efficiencies and successes, including but not limited to: increased program funding and access to grant opportunities, increased exits from homelessness, and much improved county-wide data regarding the current homeless population. Most importantly, the goal of these efforts, as intended by the creation of the original Opportunity Knocks group back in 2013, was to continue to improve how local partners can work together to end homelessness, and how to do so while having the greatest impact. The culmination of this work has been well documented between 2018 and 2021, where homeless grants captured by EDOK have paid for a number of best practice programs which have exited 1,350 individuals from homelessness during that four year period. Approximately 80% of those exits were to permanent housing destinations and 20% were to temporary housing destinations, overall. These captured and reported outcomes to the federal and state government are the most successful program results over a 4 year period in El Dorado's history. To be at a phase now where a locally designed, targeted strategic plan on homelessness can be adopted and implemented countywide, following all of the developed capacity over the past decade, the opportunity before this community to impact homelessness has the widest and greatest potential that has existed in this area of work.

COMMUNITY PLAN TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS IN EL DORADO

The purpose of developing the strategic plan was to identify specific, key changes needed to move the needle on homelessness in El Dorado and to build a roadmap for implementing those changes. Among the primary goals of the planning process were to:

- Establish achievable common goals that align with state and federal strategic plans relating to homelessness.
- Build and enhance partnerships.
- Begin to guide all parties in a common direction.
- Determine funding needs and identify potential resources and strategies, and
- Develop overall and annual metrics to track progress.

STRATEGIC PLAN VISION

All individuals and families in El Dorado County have equal access to community resources and safe and affordable housing.

STRATEGIC PLAN MISSION

To collaboratively identify and address social vulnerabilities, reduce inflow, increase prevention, and build a robust emergency response system to accomplish the functional end of homelessness in El Dorado.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND ACTION STEPS

GOAL 1: Stop Homelessness Before it Begins

GOAL 2: Increase Access to Housing for All El Dorado Residents

GOAL 3: Increases Access to Homeless Emergency Response Services

GOAL 4: Partner Across El Dorado to Build Collective Solutions

Together these four overarching Goals address the key challenges and needs identified in the plan.

Each goal then has a set of Strategies to enable the community to achieve the goal. Under each strategy, the roadmap outlines a series of Action Steps that the community can undertake to move the strategy forward.

Examples of Sample Strategies Include:

Strategy 1.2: Increase Prevention and Diversion Services in El Dorado

Strategy 2.1: Assess and Use Available Public and Private Land for Permanent Housing

Strategy 2.3 Increase Access to Housing Through a Coordinated Landlord Engagement Campaign

Strategy 3.1: Expand Access to Safe, Low-Barrier Temporary Housing Options

Strategy 3.3: Expand Services to Support Exits from Homelessness

Strategy 4.2: Strengthen the Homeless System Response Infrastructure

Strategy 4.3: Provide Information and Engagement Opportunities to People With Lived Expertise

After the Strategies, Appendix B in the Plan is a Sample Implementation Plan, which provides more detail and specificity for implementing the strategies, including a sample prioritization of the Action Steps. The success of this plan ultimately depends on the community's ability to coordinate in collectively prioritizing and implementing Action Steps.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board could choose not to receive the presentation.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION:

- 1) 13-1132, November 5, 2013, CAO update on homeless sheltering locations
- 2) 17-0741, Version 1, August 15, 2017, presentation on Opportunity Knocks and the CoC
- 3) 17-0741, Version 2, December 5, 2017, a presentation on HUD's CoC's, and the return on investment of existing CoC's in other counties
- 4) 18-1522, October 16, 2018, California Emergency Solutions and Housing 2018 (CESH 2018)
- 5) 18-1762, December 4, 2018, Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) Application
- 6) 19-0181, February 12, 2019, Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) acceptance
- 7) 19-0553, April 23, 2019, California Emergency Solutions and Housing 2019 (CESH 2019)
- 8) 19-1208, September 6, 2019, A Joint Meeting of the Cities of Placerville and South Lake Tahoe, and the County of El Dorado, on Homelessness: Presentation overview and update of El Dorado Opportunity Knocks and Launch of countywide strategic plan

- 9) 19-1317, October 22, 2019, Funding Agreement 4244 with The Center for Common Concerns, Inc. (DBA HomeBase), for a Strategic Planning Document and first-year Implementation Plan to the Opportunity Knocks Continuum of Care
- 10) 20-0161, February 11, 2020, HHAP Round 1 Grant
- 11) 20-0235, March 10, 2020, MOU with Barton Healthcare System, Inc., to provide financial support towards strategic and technical assistance, and guidance to the Opportunity Knocks Continuum of Care
- 12) 20-0490, April 14, 2020, CAO and HHSA sign Joint Policy Statement on Homelessness that documents a commitment between the County and the City of Placerville and provides direction to staff from both organizations in regards to homelessness activities
- 13) 20-1163, November 10, 2020, a presentation of the status of the Housing and Homelessness Program in the County of El Dorado.
- 14) 21-1000, July 13, 2021, Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention (HHAP) Round 2 Program (Agreement 21-HHAP-00019) and HHAP Round 2 Program (Agreement 21-HHAP-00020)
- 15) 21-1366, August 31, 2021, Presentation and update on HHSA Homeless Programs and El Dorado Opportunity Knocks CoC programs
- 16) 21-1720, November 16, 2021, HHAP Round 3 funding
- 17) 22-0181, January 25, 2022, CAO recommending the Board discuss the current El Dorado Opportunity Knocks (EDOK) Board application period and identify who should serve as the County's representative on EDOK for a two-year term, effective February 4, 2022

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the presentation and draft plan and provide feedback.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

This Board item has no financial impact.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

The Clerk of the Board to receive and file the attached presentation.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT:

Healthy Communities and Good Governance

CONTACT

Don Semon, Director, Health and Human Services Agency