



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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First District

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Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

NATHAN FLETCHER
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: September 27, 2022

05

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

RECEIVE UPDATE ON THE FLEXIBLE HOUSING POOL AND AUTHORIZE SINGLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT WITH THE REGIONAL TASKFORCE ON HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FLEXIBLE HOUSING POOL PROGRAM (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On November 19, 2019 (12), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to conduct a feasibility study on the implementation of a Flexible Housing Pool (FHP), which is a nationally recognized systems-level strategy to fund, locate, and secure housing for people experiencing homelessness in a coordinated and streamlined way. The overall approach of the FHP involves “pooling” resources from public and private entities to secure rental units and create a housing portfolio that allows individuals experiencing homelessness to quickly exit homelessness when they are matched to a unit that is paired with rental assistance and supportive services.

On January 28, 2020 (2), staff returned to the Board and presented options for a County of San Diego (County) managed FHP or a collaborative FHP with the Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH). The approved action requested staff work with the RTFH to explore developing a regional, collaborative FHP, and investigate sources for funding to allocate to the FHP. On March 10, 2020 (5), the Board approved funding to support the FHP and directed the CAO to return to the Board with a report on how the funds were leveraged and spent.

In October 2020, RTFH launched the San Diego FHP with the County acting as a partner contributing \$400,000. The FHP received 726 referrals, secured 459 units throughout San Diego County, and permanently housed 440 households between October 2020 and May 2022. Additional successes included a 92% 12-month retention rate, which exceeded the national average.

Today’s action requests the Board to receive an update on the FHP. It also requests authorization of an additional allocation of up to \$500,000 to the FHP, and in accordance with Board Policy A-87, to award a single source contract to the RTFH for the FHP.

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Today's actions support the County's vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically those communities and populations across San Diego County that have been historically left behind, as well as our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities. This will be accomplished by creating opportunities to increase housing stock and service needs of people experiencing homelessness in San Diego County and aligns with the County's Framework for Ending Homelessness by providing a person-centered and housing-first approach that uses evidence-based and data-driven solutions.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Receive an update on how \$400,000 of California Emergency Solutions and Housing funds were leveraged and spent in support of the Flexible Housing Pool.
2. Approve allocation of up to \$500,000 of California Emergency Solutions and Housing funds to the Flexible Housing Pool.
3. In accordance with Board Policy A-87, Competitive Procurement, approve and authorize the Director of the Department of Purchasing and Contracting to enter into negotiations with the Regional Task Force on Homelessness, and subject to successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award a contract for the Flexible Housing Pool for an initial term of up to one year, and up to one option year with an additional six months if needed, and to amend the contract as needed to reflect changes to requirements and funding, subject to the approval of the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency, or his designee.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities' mission is to ensure equity among all San Diegans, foster a community that is welcoming to new residents, and reduce homelessness in the region. The Office of Homeless Solutions is dedicated to addressing the root causes of homelessness and providing equitable access to preventative and supportive services for vulnerable residents.

In 2022, the We All Count Point-in-Time Count, identified 8,427 individuals as living on the streets or in shelters throughout San Diego County. Of the 4,106 who were unsheltered, 25% were 55 years of age or older, 8% were youth and 15% reported chronic homelessness. People of color are disproportionately impacted among those experiencing homelessness, with 24% identifying as Black or African American, which is nearly five times the proportion of African Americans in the region; 3% identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, which is nearly three times the proportion in the region. In addition to the We All Count Point-in-Time Count, the Regional Task Force on Homelessness Community Snapshot Dashboard, shows that approximately 30% of people experiencing homelessness identified as Hispanic in 2021. Placement of households in Flexible Housing Pool (FHP) housing have begun to address these equity issues by demonstrating that approximately 26.6% of households served by the FHP identified as African American, 37.1% were over the age of 55, and 19.7% were youth.

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To address the root causes of these statistics and provide a plan to end homelessness, the Framework for Ending Homelessness was created, outlining the County's strategic path for ending homelessness across five strategic domains (Root Causes and Prevention; Diversion and Mitigation; Services, Treatment and Outreach; Emergency/Interim Housing and Resources; and Permanent Housing and Support) and also provides a vision for building capacity across these strategic domains to ensure an equitable approach to service delivery.

People at-risk of or experiencing homelessness, impacted community members, community partners, and other key stakeholders are engaged during the development of County plans to address homelessness, and their feedback is valued and incorporated into development of programs. The County recently conducted lived experience forums in the North, East, and South Regions to gain valuable information on shaping programs. Ensuring racial and social equity in all aspects of homelessness prevention and response is one of the key principles that guides the Framework for Ending Homelessness and all items that fall under its strategic domains. It is anticipated that the FHP will provide needed housing and support countywide to those who are disproportionately represented in the homeless system including, people who are justice-involved or have a range of health and social needs, and/or who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color and young adults.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action to continue funding the Flexible Housing Pool (FHP) aligns with the County of San Diego's (County) Sustainability Goals to engage the community; provide just and equitable access; and protect health and wellbeing. Continuing the FHP will allow County Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Homelessness and Equitable Communities and community partners, such as the Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH), to engage and gather informative feedback from people with lived experience of homelessness and offer them access to housing resources such as rental assistance funded by the FHP. It will also help foster partnerships and alliances to establish collective impact and provide assistance and resources to more people experiencing homelessness. Also, by engaging with community partners such as the RTFH, this increases the ability to leverage revenue from different partners and to maximize resources in the region towards an effective solution to homelessness. The FHP is designed to promote justice and equity by facilitating low-barrier access to services and housing. It works to protect the health and wellbeing of participants by ensuring people have case management support and access to physical and behavioral healthcare through housing-based case management and supportive services. These investments in expanding affordable housing and services in chronically underserved communities strengthens the resilience of vulnerable populations and contributes to the long-term wellness of the region. The FHP will also support communities and socio-economic groups historically impacted by homelessness by creating opportunities to further engage and address housing and service needs for low-income households.

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FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-24 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of approximately \$250,000 in FY 2022-23 and costs and revenue of \$250,000 in FY 2023-24 for a total of \$500,000. Funds for this program will use existing appropriations and will be included in future Operational Plans as needed. The funding source is \$500,000 from the California Emergency Solutions in Housing program. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND.

On November 19, 2019 (12), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer to conduct a feasibility study on the implementation of a Flexible Housing Pool (FHP) and return back. A FHP is a nationally recognized systems-level strategy to fund, locate, and secure housing for people experiencing homelessness in a coordinated and streamlined way. The overall approach of the FHP involves “pooling” resources from public and private entities to secure rental units and create a housing portfolio that allows individuals experiencing homelessness to quickly exit homelessness when they are matched to a unit that is paired with rental assistance and supportive services.

Beginning in 2019, the County of San Diego (County) explored a variety of options for administering and managing a regional FHP. This included aspects such as determining the use of non-categorical or designated funds that could contribute to the FHP, managing the procurement and selection of the entity that managed the FHP fund, reviewing and approving the annual budget, reviewing and approving the use of funds, defining the eligible population, monitoring the use of funds and conducting audits, as well as monitoring and reporting on performance and outcomes.

Based on those initial findings, on January 28, 2020 (2), staff presented options for a County-managed FHP or a collaborative FHP with the Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH). The Board authorized staff to work with the RTFH to explore developing a regional, collaborative FHP, and investigate sources of funding to allocate to the FHP. On March 10, 2020 (5), the Board authorized \$400,000 of California Emergency Solutions and Housing funds to support the FHP and requested a return back on how the funds were leveraged and spent.

The FHP was intentionally designed to include flexible funding to support immediate lease-ups and have dedicated trained staff whose focus was to serve as the region’s primary centralized landlord liaison, recruit and support landlords, secure rental units, create a local housing portfolio, match participants to available rental units, provide one-time financial supports, and provide ongoing housing tenancy services to support housing stability.

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The Continuum of Care (CoC) is a federally designated regional planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. In San Diego County the RTFH is the lead for this planning body. The RTFH's creation of a regional FHP as part of the CoC's workplan addressed the lack of access to available affordable rental housing for those experiencing homelessness in San Diego County. The approach of securing existing housing in the rental market was critical to providing timely access to a range of housing types. The partnering entities included the RTFH, the County, and Funders Together to End Homelessness San Diego. The Funders Together to End Homelessness San Diego introduced the concept of the FHP to the San Diego County region. The entities that pooled resources were the RTFH (\$1,868,417) and the County (\$400,000).

In July 2020, the RTFH entered into a contractual agreement with Brilliant Corners to operate the FHP. In October 2020, the San Diego County FHP was implemented, and in December 2020, the first participant was permanently housed. Benefits of the FHP included:

- Built capacity utilizing the existing rental market;
- Ability to secure units immediately and begin paying landlords while tenants are identified and attached to the unit;
- Ability to enter into agreements with landlords to secure a large number of units in a housing complex;
- Stronger supports for shared housing and single room occupancies;
- Flexible funding to reduce barriers and pay for expenses such as deposits, application fees, utility assistance, rental arrears, and any other identified housing need to move a household into permanent housing;
- Ability to partner with providers to leverage flexible funds to reduce barriers and house more people;
- Dedicated staff to focus on landlord engagement, recruitment, and understanding landlord motivation;
- Collaboration with existing homeless service providers that offer both rental assistance and housing-based case management and supportive services; and
- Having specialty case management, tenancy supports, and landlord engagement supports which enables a focus on the practical challenges of securing units, forming stable landlord partnerships, and supporting tenants for long-term housing stability.

Overall Goals and Outcomes

The overall goal for the first year of the program was to place 140 households into permanent housing; promote a regional strategy for reducing homelessness in all 18 cities; serve priority populations of focus, including veterans and youth; support housing exits for households as part of the COVID-19 response; engage new partners; and promote regional landlord strategy and collaboration.

The FHP exceeded the goal of housing placement and demonstrated numerous other successes between October 2020 and May 2022. This includes a 92% 12-month retention rate, which exceeded the national average. The program received 726 referrals from community partners for

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housing and placed 440 households in permanent housing. In addition, it secured 459 rental units in the following areas of the county:

- North County - 52
- Central - 155
- Downtown - 89
- East County - 95
- South County - 68

The FHP is an innovative program that met and exceeded the outcome objectives and has proven to be a critical community resource for housing more veterans, youth, families, and chronically homeless persons throughout San Diego County. Despite barriers brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the FHP successfully leveraged resources and partnerships to secure units in a high cost, tight rental market, and provide the critical landlord-tenancy supports to ensure ongoing housing stability.

Today's action requests the Board to receive an update on the FHP. Additionally, in accordance with Board Policy A-87, it requests authority to award a single source contract to the RTFH for the FHP for an initial term of one year, with one option year, and an additional six months if needed. Due to its role as the lead of the San Diego CoC and the administrator of the FHP, RTFH is the only provider that can provide this service on behalf of the County and qualifies for a single source contract to administer the FHP pursuant to Board Policy A-87:

- Section 1D3: The procurement is for services from a provider with unique knowledge, skill, or ability not available from other sources.

The annual contract amount is estimated at \$250,000. The anticipated start date of the contract is the date of award, subject to successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price. These actions support the County's Framework for Ending Homelessness which provides guiding principles on homelessness that align existing work throughout the region to assist people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

As demonstrated by the results of the pilot program with RTFH, the FHP is a solution that is capable of helping some of the most vulnerable homeless persons living in the region. RTFH's ability to leverage revenue from different partners helps to maximize finite resources in the region towards an effective solution.

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposed actions support the County of San Diego's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Sustainability (Resiliency) by creating initiatives that reduce and eliminate poverty by promoting economic sustainability for all; Equity (Health and Economic Opportunities) by creating programs that value health, housing, and economic opportunity; and Community (Engagement) by improving the quality of life for individuals experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness through increased availability of services and resources.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Robbins-Meyer", followed by a period.

HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A