

## **A** CCOUNTABILITY



Clear responsibilities aligned to authority, resources, and flexibility for all levels of government

Counties and cities across California are leading and collaborating to provide solutions to homelessness. Many counties and cities have already forged countywide plans that bring together cities, tribal governments, continuums of care, housing authorities, managed care plans, and community based organizations. To effectively address homelessness statewide and increase accountability, partnerships and plans are necessary. This will involve cities and counties coming together with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and actions needed to address homelessness.

The state can support local governments by aligning fiscal incentives in a way that supports defined responsibilities and collaboration. The Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) grants have been an important flexible funding source to support local efforts to address homelessness and recent distributions have encouraged the submission of joint plans for overlapping jurisdictions. More state actions that further local coordination are warranted.

In order to build a comprehensive and accountable system, not only must there be plans with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and actions, but there also must be ongoing funding from the state. Local governments have made significant investments to address homelessness. However, counties and cities are not able to make long-term commitments to a comprehensive system of care with one-time state funding and will not be able to maintain the level of services temporarily supported by the federal COVID-19 related funding and HHAP funding. Sustained state funding, paired with local flexibility and technical assistance, is necessary to achieve continued and sustained progress on homelessness and to meet measurable goals aligned to investments and authority.

Current state and federal funding streams that support homelessness efforts are fraught with complexity and support a patchwork of programs administered by different governmental entities. This has often resulted in actions by different entities that are not aligned and accountable to measurable goals. The current funding structure has led to fractured decision making and administrative convoluted that hinder progress in addressing homelessness.

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### **TO IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE RECOMMENDED:**

- Consolidate HHAP grant and reporting countywide or within a multi-county region to support a countywide or regional plan with one fiscal agent. In some instances, such as large counties with big cities, a countywide plan with multiple fiscal agents may be accommodated. Allocations through the fiscal agent will be determined by the agreed upon plan and commensurate with the level of roles and responsibilities that each county and city has within the plan. Continuums of care would also be allocated funding through the fiscal agent consistent with assigned responsibilities under the countywide plan. It is critical that these plans are built and approved by counties and cities that are ultimately responsible and accountable to constituents for the implementation of the plan and have unique authority to site required infrastructure.

- Provide HHAP funding ongoing to support one countywide or regional plan to address homelessness.
- As a condition of receiving HHAP funding, counties and cities must agree to a defined set of roles and responsibilities related to homelessness that shall minimally include, unless otherwise determined:
  - Counties have the responsibility for health and social safety net programs on behalf of the state and administer these services in a manner that reaches individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
  - Counties have the responsibility to provide specialty mental health and substance use disorder services to low-income persons and administer these services in a manner that reaches individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
  - Cities shall be responsible for siting, funding, and supporting shelters for the unsheltered population within their jurisdiction. Counties shall be responsible for siting, funding, and supporting shelters for the unsheltered population within the unincorporated areas of the county. Shelter beds needed shall be determined by the concentration of homelessness in each incorporated and unincorporated jurisdiction.
  - Cities shall be responsible for siting permanent supportive housing within their jurisdiction. Counties shall be responsible for siting permanent supportive housing within the unincorporated areas of the county.
  - Cities shall be responsible for clean-up and sanitation of encampments within their jurisdiction. Counties shall be responsible for clean-up and sanitation of encampments in unincorporated areas of the county. These responsibilities are done with an understanding of state and federal responsibility for clean-up and sanitation of encampments on state-owned properties and federal lands, respectively.
  - Clearly define responsibilities for cities and counties related to encampment outreach.
- Funded entities must submit a local homelessness action plan that includes clear outcome goals on a range of metrics, including how the plan addresses equity. Funded entities can be held accountable to these goals only to the extent that the state provides sufficient funding for the reasonable costs of the interventions identified to achieve those goals.
- Maximize local flexibility for uses of this funding in order that funded entities have the ability to best utilize this funding at the local level to achieve the goals of the homelessness action plan. Improve flexibility and understanding of diverse local conditions in designing requirements for local plans.
- Provide enhanced technical assistance, especially to those jurisdictions with limited resources, staffing, and community partners.
- Provide performance-based funding for countywide plans that meet metrics in reducing homelessness. Funded entities should be rewarded for aggressive goals and achieving success.
- Establish a minimum county amount to ensure that smaller counties can sufficiently support staffing and programs. Relying on Point-in-Time (PIT) counts solely for allocations can negatively impact counties with severe winter weather. Minimum allocations are a consistent feature of many health and human services programs.
- Consider consolidating or redesigning other related programs and funding streams that support homelessness efforts, such as rental assistance and encampment resolution, to further simplify and streamline funding.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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